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RECASTING HEGEL'S ETHICAL THEORY

By

Theresa Wambui

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In Philosophy
at
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ABSTRACT

RECASTING HEGEL'S ETHICAL THEORY

BY

Theresa Wambui

Duquesne University – Pittsburgh, 2005

Under the Supervision of Prof. Wilhelm S. Wurzer

This study focuses on the contribution of George Wilhelm Hegel to the modern ethical reflection in which the state is understood as an ethical institution. The goal of this study is to recast Hegel's ethical theory in order to enable his ethical thought to contribute to contemporary reflection on global ethical issues. At issue in Hegel's discourse is the problem of individual and community freedom. Hegel's thesis hinges on the notion of the 'truth' as 'the whole.' In Herbert Marcuse's interpretation, the truth and the whole is freedom. Hegel's ethical theory aims to resolve the tension between individual and communal freedom by synthesizing the two poles to make an ethical whole, the possibility of which lies in the concept of 'recognition.' This study aims fill in the gap apparent in Hegel's synthesis of individual and communal freedom. I propose two principles: justice as fairness and reinterpretation of Hegel's idea of development of consciousness' as the conditions for concrete realization individual and communal freedom.

Professor Wilhelm S. Wurzer

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DEDICATION
My Father and Mother

THERESA WAMBUI
RECASTING HEGEL'S ETHICAL THEORY

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INTRODUCTION

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 1770 – 1831 is considered the greatest of the modern philosophers. Hegel is esteemed for his profound understanding of human nature and the elements that give meaning to human existence. Such elements include politics, religion and other social institutions. Hegel anticipated issues of freedom and social organizations that would occupy scholars and governments centuries after him. Allen Wood reflects that modern political theories cannot resist Hegelian influence. Modern democracies can be traced from Hegel's thought. Originality in knowledge is hard to come by, for no thinker is a *cradle* of one's thought system. However, it must be admitted that Hegel's superiority of thought has originality in that he brings both ancient and modern into a relationship as a historical development of philosophical thought, so that his system is a continuation of that long conversation.

This study aims at developing Hegel's ethical theory. The idea of 'developing' is consonant with Hegel's philosophical system; in his main work, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel characterizes the 'truth' as the 'whole.' For Hegel, a holistic conception of truth takes into account not only its genesis, but also its 'process' and 'goal'. This is the idea that permeates Hegel's entire thought and is evident in his claim, "The real issue is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather, the result together with the process, through which it comes about."¹ In his interpretation of Hegel, Herbert Marcuse argues that for Hegel the 'truth' and the 'whole' is one and the same; it is freedom.² This is the

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) trans. A.V. Miller (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977), §3.

² Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1941), 10.

goal to which the process of human activity is directed. It can be inferred that Hegel's ethical theory is a theory of evolution of freedom from one phase to another.

This study is a critical analysis of Hegel's thought on freedom as the central issue in ethics, and examines the possibility of the realization of freedom. Alienation in the society is one of the dark aspects in Hegel's thought, an indication that there is a missing piece in his theory. It is argued that as Hegel has it, the realization of freedom takes more than he offers in his theory. This study aims to determine what is lacking for the realization of freedom for all, and to suggest practical conditions for the realization of Hegel's vision for humanity.

Some of Hegel's critics hold that his ethical system is out of touch with reality, and so cannot be appealed to for contemporary ethical problems. This is a limited reading of Hegel because Hegel's treatment of freedom influences all modern political and social thought. By engaging the question of freedom, Hegel touches on the deepest issue in human existence. Given that the problem of ethics/morality is a problem of freedom, to argue that Hegel's ethical theory cannot be appealed to in modern ethical problems would be tantamount to saying that ethics has nothing to do with freedom.

The objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to highlight Hegel's contribution to modern ethical reflection, 2. to enable this master thinker's thought to contribute to contemporary reflection on global issues.

Hegel is a contextual thinker and his own words bears him out: every thinker is a child of his time. With this in mind, the study comprises five chapters: Chapter One explores the context of Hegel's ethical thought, which is a critique of Kant's theory of morality. The objective is to offer a critical analysis of Kant's 'categorical imperative' so as to decipher the problematic issues that are of concern to Hegel.

Chapter Two is on Fichte's critique of Kant, the relevance of which lies in its influence on Hegel's reading of Kant. It examines Fichte's criticism against Kant's moral theory and how he endeavors to resolve those issues. The main issues is Kant's grounding of freedom as the basis of moral and knowledge claims. Hegel disagrees with both Kant's and Fichte's views of freedom.

Chapter Three explores Hegel's ethical theory. The chapter is a critical analysis of Hegel's criticism against Kant's theory as presented in the latter's categorical imperative. I argue that while in certain respects Hegel's criticism is justified, there are respects in which Hegel's criticism is based on misinterpretation of the Kantian principles. Hegel's criticism is more a development of Kant's theory other than a total rejection of the latter's ethical principles.

Chapter Four is a critique of Hegel's ethical theory. The objective of this chapter is to explore both Hegel's contribution to the modern ethical reflection and limitations inherent in his position on various ethical issues such as freedom, the state, and the place of the human person in this scheme. In this chapter, I take up polemics concerning the respects in which Hegel's ethical principles transcend Kant's, and in which respects they cannot. I argue that despite Hegel's idea of the state as the realization of concrete freedom of the individual and society, the freedom envisioned is possible only to some members in society. Consequently, at issue is not a choice between Hegel's and Kant's principles, but what is best in both. Hegel's ethical theory needs Kant's vision of humanity. The chapter articulates what Hegel's idea of recognition would mean in the contemporary world. The question concerns whether or how Hegel's notion of recognition can respond to the problem of *alienation* in contemporary society. I argue for the need of integrating into Hegel's ethical system other ethical reflections so as to bring it into conversation with other cultures.

Chapter Five concludes with a proposal for the possibility of freedom both for the individual and society. I argue for the need to retrieve the principle of justice as fairness as the basis of concrete realization of freedom. Second, I argue for the necessity of a philosophical contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of development in human life. This recasts Hegel's idea of 'progression of consciousness,' in terms befitting the issues of today in a given cultural setting.

CHAPTER 1

KANT'S MORAL THEORY

Many thinkers after Immanuel Kant would agree that it is impossible to sidestep him in formulating a philosophical theory. John Ladd alludes to this fact in his introduction to Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals Part II* in his remark that Kant's greatness as a moral philosopher is indisputable even by those who disagree with him. Hegel asserts in his *Phenomenology* that a theory can be *superceded* but *cannot* be rendered altogether useless. In Hegel's view one aspect is left behind while another is carried forward. Following Hegel, it means that to do justice to Kant's ethical theory, it is necessary to appreciate what is sound in it and to address the thorny issues arising from his propositions.

This chapter focuses on Kant's categorical imperative and comprises four sections. Section A is be a critical analysis of the *categorical imperative*, which comprises three formulas, the first and the third of which have their derivative formulas. The aim is to explore the content of these formulas and to decipher important arguments in each. In addition, I address certain difficulties arising from the categorical imperative, particularly the *antagonistic* relation of the moral law and human nature. Section B explores Kant's defense of freedom. This is significant because it is from the idea of freedom that the moral law is deduced. Section C investigates the postulates of pure practical reason. This section is important in Kant's moral theory because he considers these postulates as necessarily following from the idea of the moral law. These are: the idea of freedom, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. Since section B examines the idea of freedom, I do not examine it in this section. Finally, Section D is a critical evaluation of Kant's moral theory. First, I argue that certain aspects, such as the view of morality as pure

duty and unmixed with nature, makes morality inconceivable. This means, there is a need to integrate the moral law into human nature. Second, I argue that although morality is shown to lead necessarily to the postulates of pure reason, there is a problem arising from certain inconsistencies in Kant's position on the postulates. Concerning this problem, I focus on the question of *infinite* progress towards *complete harmony* of will with moral law. Finally, I take up the argument on what is sound in Kant's moral theory. The focus is to establish the relevance of the concept of "universal legislation" in Kant's moral theory both to the individual and the global community. Before examining the formula of the categorical imperative I discuss its conditions. The point is to bring to the fore certain concepts that are pertinent to understanding the categorical imperative.

A

THE FORMULA OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

The point of departure in Kant's moral theory is the idea that there is in humanity a universal concept of duty and moral laws. He argues that this universal concept of duty needs justification. The reason for this justification is that if the moral law is to carry any obligation it must be shown to be necessary and must have its basis *a priori* from reason.³

The key ideas in Kant's moral proposition are the 'necessity' of moral commands and their *a priori* basis. By necessity is meant that the moral law must command unconditionally; i.e., it must be held binding for all rational beings. For Kant, to be "rational" is to be "morally obligated." This position is based on understanding of "rationality" as freedom. He points to the fact that we think of ourselves as "causes *a priori* efficient through freedom." Consequently, we distinguish between seeing ourselves as agents through our freedom, and being passive spectators of our own actions. This freedom is explicit in the distinction between forming our own concepts as opposed to being passively affected by objects. Kant characterizes the ability to produce concepts as 'our own' activity.⁴ His argument is that human imagination is engaged in a free act of synthesis of empirical data resulting to concepts according to a rule. Rational beings then can be said to be free in the sense that their activities are not imposed externally but are the source of their own actions.

Kant's concept of rationality is the capacity to set ends and willing the means to accomplish them, i.e., capacity to act on imperatives. Imperatives are two kinds, *hypothetical* and *categorical*. They are *hypothetical* if their command is conditional; that is, the conditions under

³ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Edition, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Uppers Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1995), §389.

⁴ *Ibid.*, § 451.

which a given object is realized is to adopt certain actions. In Kant's terms, the principle of *hypothetical imperative* is, if one wills the end one must will the means necessary to that end.⁵ According to Kant, this imperative cannot be a law because it is contingent on the agent's desire.⁶

On the contrary, a categorical imperative commands unconditionally; therefore, it has the necessity of being a law and has its basis *a priori* in reason. As a law of reason, the categorical imperative spells out how one ought to act if one is a rational being. Consequently, the categorical imperative is binding to every rational will and does not consider the material aspect of the action.⁷ Ernst Cassirer points to the difference between the two imperatives as pertaining to ends and means. *Hypothetical imperatives* are concerned with adopting certain means to realize a desired end. On the contrary, the *categorical imperative* presents itself as an unconditional demand without further end in consideration; hence, it has ultimate value in itself.⁸

The idea of moral obligation following from freedom of the will is what Kant characterizes as reciprocity between freedom and morality.⁹ Consequently, Kant's moral theory is grounded on the idea of freedom of a rational being, which is the source of human dignity. On the basis of human dignity, Kant infers that the rational being is the source and object of the moral law. The corollary of this proposition is that the rational will has absolute worth and so is an end in itself.¹⁰ The fundamental question is how Kant arrives at the moral obligation from human rationality. The relationship of rationality and the moral obligation is important and will be explored in Section B of this chapter.

⁵Ibid., §417.

⁶ Idem, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1956), §20.

⁷Ibid..

⁸ Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 245.

⁹ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, §30.

Concerning the *a priori* basis of moral law, Kant means that the moral law must not derive from object of desire, but it must have its ground entirely in reason.¹¹ In this proposition the argument is that the moral law does not have a material object as the end; rather, the moral law is the object in itself. In addition, the moral law cannot be grounded in examples of morality. The reason for this is that any given example is based on yet another standard, so it cannot serve as the ultimate principle of morality. Kant believes that if the basis of morality is empirical, all we can expect is mere confusion of principles, e.g., happiness, fear of God, etc.¹² This is problematic because his project is to establish the ultimate principle of morality. Kant's position on the moral law as end or duty raises serious controversies and is the basis of Hegel's criticism against Kant.

In his critique of Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer disputes the *a priori* basis of morality. According to Schopenhauer, we are what we are by nature and so we are predetermined. To know one's nature is a question of trial and error until we find what is agreeable with our nature; therefore, we must learn from experience what we are capable of. Character then is acting according to the knowledge of who we are as individuals.¹³ Schopenhauer's claim here is rather problematic. If each character is already determined and one must discover what one's nature is capable of, only the individual can know one's capability. However, it is not clear what can prevent error in one's judgment concerning what one is capable of. The problem with this position is that it is difficult to avoid moral complacency. This position does not explain on what basis can others make a moral demand.

¹⁰ Idem, *Foundations*, §428.

¹¹ Ibid., §408.

¹² Ibid., §409.

¹³ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. I, trans. E.F.J. Payne, (New York, NY: Falcon's Wing Press, 1958), 305 – 305.

The framework on which Kant's moral theory is grounded is the principle of "pure practical reason. What is practical means what is possible through freedom."¹⁴ As mentioned above, the idea of freedom plays a central role in Kant's moral theory. This notion is discussed in detail in Section B of this chapter. At the moment, it suffices to note that Kant's idea of freedom is that 'absolute spontaneity' of a cause.¹⁵ In the *Foundations*, freedom is characterized as causality in human practical judgment just as natural laws are the causality in all natural events.¹⁶

The principles that determine the will are either "subjective" or "objective." Kant uses the idea of 'maxims' to distinguish "subjective" from "objective" principles. By a maxim is meant that the reason(s) for performing a given action are based on what is considered necessary for the individual; therefore, the rules from which one acts are considered binding only for the agent. On the other hand, principles are "objective" if they ought to determine the will of every rational being.¹⁷ For Kant, if a given action is to have any moral worth, the principle under which it is performed must be that of the moral law, which is valid for all rational beings.¹⁸ To act under the idea of the "objective principle" of moral law is to act for the sake of duty, and consciousness of duty on the subjective side of moral action is characterized as a *good will*. For Kant, a good will and duty are intrinsically connected because a 'good will' is manifest in moral actions. Consequently, a *good will* is that will which acts "for the sake of the moral law." With regard to a *good will*, Kant states:

"Nothing in the world – indeed nothing even beyond the world – can be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a *good will*."¹⁹

¹⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (1781 and 1787 editions) ed. Werner Pluhar, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), B 828.

¹⁵ Ibid., B 474.

¹⁶ Idem, *Foundations*, §446.

¹⁷ Idem, *Critique of Practical Reason*, § 19.

¹⁸ Idem, *Foundations*, §401

¹⁹ Ibid., §393.

Based on the above text, Kant indicates that a *good will* has the prerogative of being absolutely good. This idea is based on his premise that of all the things that are characterized as “good” their goodness is not absolute. It follows that human qualities, such as intelligence, courage, health, and indeed, material things like power or wealth are good, but not in themselves. For Kant, all these things can be misused; therefore, their characterization as “good” depends on their being used by a *good will*. In addition, qualities like temperance can endow the human person with an admirable character, but still they do not have an intrinsic worth unless accompanied by a *good will*.²⁰ According to Kant, only a *good will* is good in itself independent of any end or utility; therefore, it is absolutely good.²¹

H.J. Paton understands Kant’s idea of a “good will” to refer to a moral will; hence, a *good will* is so characterized on the basis of its moral character. According to Paton, a ‘moral will’ is not limited by any circumstance; therefore, a moral will is ‘good’ in an absolute sense and so without qualification.²²

Following from the idea of a *good will* Kant distinguishes acts performed ‘from duty’ and those performed ‘according to duty’. In the former, the action is the end and so not done in view of any end other than it is right. On the contrary, the latter actions are performed for reasons other than duty. Kant cites the example of a businessman, who may choose to be honest to his customers not because to deceive his customers is against duty but because of fear of consequences such as a bad reputation. In this instance, the action is in accordance with duty but not from duty.²³ For Kant, only actions performed from duty have a moral worth.²⁴

Allen Wood understands Kant to mean that although the actions according to duty are not

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., § 394.

²² H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), Ch. II, § 1.

immoral, those done for the sake of the moral law are more esteemed than those performed according to duty but not from duty.²⁵ The distinction between the motives, of one and the same action in Kant's moral theory is problematic. If Wood is right, it is not possible to esteem one and the same action higher or lower based on motives for we can never know with what motive a good action is performed. It seems that only the agent is able to judge the principle of one's action in which case the judgment remains subjective. Consequently, all we can have are actions performed according to duty. Since only actions performed from duty have a moral worth, the public cannot assign a moral character to the human action. But this is a problem because the human community should be able to do so as the agent may rationalize anything. In normal circumstances however, once a "good deed" is performed, the person affected by the action is not worried about the motive of the agent. It seems to me that the question of motive is important in legal procedures wherein, the nature of motive may mitigate the degree of "imputability" on the part of the agent.

Kant's fundamental claim is that pure reason is practical. According to Kant, the moral law is only justifiable under the presupposition that pure reason is practical. The implication of this proposition is that the fact of practical reason not only accounts for rational beings' general conduct, but also that moral demand can be made on rational beings. The objective of the *Formula of the Categorical Imperative* in all its variations, is to prove that reason is practical, and in so doing justify or account for the possibility of the categorical imperative, the practical law. Having explored the fundamental concepts in Kant's moral theory the study proceeds to explore the content of the three formulas of the categorical imperative.

²³ Kant, *Foundation*, §397.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, §398.

²⁵ Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

Formula I: The Formula of the Universal Law

This formula states: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”²⁶ This formula has its derivative, the *Formula of the Universal law of Nature*, which states: “Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a *Universal Law of Nature*.”²⁷ In the following section the discussion focuses on Kant’s thought in the *Formula of the universal Law* and its variant, the *Formula of the Law of Nature*.

The *Formula of Universal Law* sets a condition for all moral actions. We must act only on the maxim by which we can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. The main concepts here are the maxim and universal law.

As was noted earlier, a “maxim” was rendered a subjective reason for acting. Here the formula of universal law requires that we act only on that maxim by which we can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. The point is that whatever reason(s) we have for performing a certain act, we must ‘be able to will’ that other human subjects base their action on the same reasons. According to Paton, the significance of Kant’s introduction of maxims is that they mediate between the abstract universal law and the particular actions. That means we must always examine the principle of our action. Paton argues that a “maxim” is not simply a question of choosing a principle for acting but choosing one that is valid for all rational beings.²⁸

Concerning the idea of universality, Wood’s view is that universality is a fundamental criterion if the moral conduct is to be considered rational and binding for all rational beings. According to Wood, it is not necessary that all people in different cultures and situations judge

²⁶ Ibid., §421.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Paton, , Ch. XIV, §4.

the same action as rational in the same way. However, there is a standard and this standard is that we act according to that principle such that we can will it to become a universal law.²⁹

In order to understand Kant's idea of the universal law it is important to recall his idea of a *good will*. The absolute worth of a *good will* arises from capacity to act for the sake of duty and to act for the sake of duty is to act for the sake of the moral law, which is universal. According to Kant, if the will is not to contradict itself, it must be able to universalize its maxim. His point is that a universal law, which we also will, cannot be in conflict with itself. Kant contends that only the "categorical imperative" is such a principle, i.e., the principle of a *good will*. Its formula is to "Act on those maxims, which can at the same time have themselves as universal laws."³⁰ Kant seems to argue that what is universally good is ultimately good for the self. As the formula of the categorical imperative will show, the idea of universality plays a central role in Kant's moral theory. In Kant's formula of universal law, there is a tension between duty i.e., acting according to a universal principle and inclination, the subjective principle.

In his appropriation of Kant's moral theory, Immanuel Levinas' theory revolves on the concept of the 'Other' as opposed to the moral subject. According to this view, the principle of the self-satisfaction, which Levinas characterizes as *Egoity* is distinguished from the 'Other' by radical objectivity. In Levinas' ethical theory, the self is *passive* in the sense that the self demands nothing from the *Other*. Edith Wyschogrod's interpretation of Levinas' thought is that the objectivity of the moral law must be negative; meaning by this, the reference is the *Other*. If it is positive, the self imposes the measures and this undermines the moral law because the measures have to do with self-satisfaction. For Levinas, there is complete asymmetry in the relation between the *Other* and the self. This means the *Other* is the point of reference, a

²⁹Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 57.

³⁰ Kant, *Foundations*, §437.

standpoint comparable to Kant's concept of a *good will*, which requires a complete disregard for material object as the end of moral action.³¹

While the human person is the principle of morality in both Kant and Levinas, the self remains a problem. The question is how to relate the moral law to the subject of the moral law. In Levinas' argument the subject is bracketed in preference to the *Other*. However, as Heidegger points out in his *Being and Time*, Da-sein is an issue to itself.³² The idea here is that the self is concerned about its existence. Therefore, it is important that the ethical formulation include the self since it is the moral agent. Consequently, this fact cannot be sidestepped in ethical formulation as Levinas seems to do. Paton's idea of reciprocity of moral law resolves the problem of the question of the moral subject. It suggests a reality of mutuality in moral obligation, a fact Levinas ignores. If Paton is right in his reading of Kant's idea of universality, Levinas undermines the meaning Kant has in this concept in his emphasis on the *Other*. In this respect, Korsgaard's point concerning this issue is valid. She contends that to hold one another responsible is to treat each other as persons and so, reciprocity as such, is found both in friends and in the state. The only difference is that for state it is enforced while in friends it is voluntary.

Concerning this issue, Schopenhauer's criticism of Kant's idea of universality is that *egoism* is the principle of his ethics. Schopenhauer insists that Kant's demand that one must be able to universalize one's maxim is tantamount to saying "do to no one what you would not want done to you." The argument here is that this proposition is essentially based on self-interest.³³

³¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *The problem of Ethical Metaphysics*, ed. Edith Wyschogrod, (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2000), 229

³² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), §12.

³³ Schopenhauer, 525.

Regarding Schopenhauer's criticism, my view is that it is based on a limited reading of Kant's moral theory. Schopenhauer's evaluation is only based on the first formula. But as Wood alleges, this way of understanding Kant misses the real import of Kant's ethical theory, which continues to unfold up to the third formula.³⁴ As Kant's whole formula unfolds the principle is the dignity of human person as such, both of the self and of the other. This is the meaning of Kant's second formula of humanity as end in itself.

In view of Kant's idea of universality, Paton's argues that for a moral law to hold as universal it must have an objective criterion and this is universality.³⁵ He points out the important characteristic of the universality of moral law – 'reciprocity' of obligation among persons. According to the idea of *reciprocity*, there is inconsistency in the moral agent to apply a given moral standard to the other human agent and demand to be treated with a different one. Paton's argument is that "if I claim to be treated in one way, I must be prepared to *reciprocate* the same treatment to the other."³⁶ We can now relate the *formula of the universal law* to its derivative formula stated above.

Derivative of Formula I: The Formula of the Law of Nature

This formula states: "Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a universal law of nature."³⁷ Wood's interpretation this formula is that it is an attempt to render the *formula of universal law* some content, because the latter is merely formal. The law of nature is familiar to our experience. The idea then is to inquire if we can consistently will a system of nature that works with the law of our maxim.³⁸

³⁴Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Pg. 82.

³⁵ Paton, , Ch. XIV, §1.

³⁶ Ibid., Ch. XIV, §3.

³⁷Kant, *Foundations*, §421.

³⁸Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Pg. 80.

Following Wood, Paton points out Kant's awareness that to will that our maxim become a universal law of nature is beyond our power; hence, he uses the phrase, we ought to 'act as though' in the *formula of universal law of nature*. With this idea, we have to imagine ourselves as part of nature under whose laws we are subjects; hence, the formula of the universal law is only applicable through the *formula of the law of nature*. Paton points out that through the *formula of the universal law of nature* we cannot arrive at perfect duties. This is because all that this formula requires is that our maxim accord with the universal law of nature, but it does not say anything about the particular duties we ought to perform.³⁹

The significance of the law of nature however, lies in its 'teleological law.' Paton's reading of Kant is that in addition to the causal law in nature there is a teleological law. This is evident in Kant's claim that there is intrinsic purpose in all organized beings such that nothing is without reason.⁴⁰ According to Paton, Kant's claim is that nature is purposive and everything in it must be understood from this perspective. Consequently, proper understanding of human nature includes the idea of purposefulness. Teleology is the law of human nature, and like the teleological law of nature, human actions are purposeful. Morality then requires that we act with the idea that nature has a purpose, i.e., considering human nature in terms of systematic harmony of purposes in accordance with the law of nature.⁴¹ So understood, the fundamental question in morality pertains to whether our maxim would accord with such a harmony, preserve it, or altogether destroy it. Paton argues that at the heart of Kant's division of duties into 'perfect' and 'imperfect' is the idea that these duties have to do with the *realization* of this harmonious

³⁹Paton, XV, §1.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hachett Publishing Company, 1987), §60.

⁴¹ Paton, Ch. XV, §4.

purpose. The question then is whether a will that aims at such a harmony of ends in human nature could will its maxim as the law of nature.⁴²

Onora Nell draws our attention to the significance of the phrase “we must be able to will” in the *formula of the universal law*. According to Nell, to ‘be able to will’ is a canon for all moral judgments.⁴³ This follows from Kant’s argument that some actions are such that their maxims cannot be thought of as a universal law of nature without contradiction, worse still being willed to be such a law. Kant contends that although some maxims can be thought without contradiction, yet they cannot be willed to be a law of nature, because a will that universalizes such maxims would be in conflict with itself.⁴⁴

Kant’s example of universalization of a subjective principle is false promising to get out of a difficult financial situation. He argues that this maxim cannot be universalized without contradiction because the very act of promising would end since no one would trust anyone else. Consequently, the ends that prompt the act of false promising would be impossible to achieve.⁴⁵

Kant’s argument is significant in this example. In everyday life, the implied, nonverbal expression of trust is what makes life livable; for example, contracts of different sorts, and promises simple or complex are possible only within the idea that people can for the most part be trusted to keep their promises.

Nell’s interpretation of Kant is that there are two kinds of contradictions: ‘contradiction in concept’ and ‘contradiction in the will.’ According to Nell, the ‘contradiction in the concept’ test must have the “maxim of the action’ and its ‘universalized typified counterpart’ simultaneously. That means the counterpart must not be universalized alone. The important

⁴² Ibid., Ch. XV, §5.

⁴³ Onora Neill, *Acting on Principle: An Essay on Kantian Ethics*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1975), 60.

⁴⁴ Kant, *Foundations*, §424.

question is whether the agent can ‘consistently’ and ‘simultaneously’ hold one’s subjective principle and will its universalized form. According to Nell, not only must the agent intend the immediate action but also all the conditions that can make the contemplated action possible.⁴⁶ If Nell is right, then successful false promising must intend such conditions as would make this action successful. But if it is a law of nature, it means the promising would end because no one trusts any other.

In Kant’s example of “refusing to help others” as a maxim, he contends that it is possible to imagine the law of nature in which no one helps the other. However, a will that intends this will be in conflict with itself, since there are times when one necessarily needs other people’s help. The argument is, in willing such a law, one would be willingly robbing oneself of the very help one needs from others.⁴⁷ Wood’s interpretation of Kant is that we would not rationally deprive ourselves of other people’s voluntary help. He argues that certain types of help, such as love and sympathy, which we need from others, are well beyond what we can rightly claim from them. Consequently, Kant’s argument is based on human interdependency. Our dependency on others implies that our needs, projects, goals, and our very well being are subject to failure without other people’s benevolence. According to Wood, this empirical claim attests that our self-love cannot be separated from our need to be loved, which is manifested in other people’s help when we are in need.⁴⁸

Kant’s example of refusing to help others is typical of the “contradiction in the will.” With regard to this, Nell argues that Kant’s basic assumption is that rational beings have ends. According to the principle of *hypothetical imperative*, whoever wills the end must necessarily

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, §422.

⁴⁶Nell, 69.

⁴⁷ Kant, *Foundations*, §423.

⁴⁸Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*, Pg. 95

will the means to that end. However, to will the means to one's ends, also implies that one must will other people's help, should one's efforts alone prove insufficient for realizing the desired end. To will others' help implies that one cannot at the same time will a system of nature in which no one helps the other.⁴⁹

The significance of Kant's claim should not be underestimated. Although at the first sight it seems quite self-centered, it points to a fundamental fact of human life; what we are and what we become is to a great extent determined by others. Aristotle is the precursor of this idea in his claim that "...without friends no one would choose to live even if he had all other goods..."⁵⁰ For Aristotle, to love another is equivalent to loving our very self.⁵¹ The important question pertains not to whether Kant's argument is based on self-interest and unfit for moral principle; rather, the question is whether as humans we can get away from the need to love and be loved without destroying an important element of what it is to be human.

On the whole, Kant makes the following remark concerning the human breach of the categorical imperative: In any violation of duty, we do not actually will that our maxim should become a universal law. We only make an exception for ourselves for the sake of our desires and only for a given occasion. Kant maintains that if all is viewed from reason's perspective, we find contradiction in our will, in that a given principle is binding for all rational beings and at the same time it makes exceptions.⁵² He argues that our will is affected by both reason and inclination. Viewed in this way, there is *no* contradiction in taking the will as determined by

⁴⁹ Ibid., Pg. 87.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle* Vol. II, ed. Jonathan Barnes, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), Bk. VIII, Ch. 1, 1154b 5 – 10.

⁵¹ Bk. IX, Ch. 4, 1066a 35.

⁵² Kant, *Foundations*, §424.

reason, and also being affected by inclinations, and that this phenomenon arises from the *opposition* of desires to the dictates of reason.⁵³

I take Kant's argument to mean that pure reason can determine the will, since even when we choose to act according to inclinations, we still subject our judgment to reason with regard to whether or not to go along with our desire. However, since the individual would not have anyone other than oneself adopt this principle, this is an indication that we would not will a law that permitted arbitrary choices in favor of individuals.

In view of both the *formula of the universal law* and its variant, the *formula of the law of nature*, Wood notes certain difficulties. First, although Kant demands that the maxim of our actions accord with the universal law, he does not spell out what this law is. In other words, the "universal law" is introduced without its content. Second, the criteria to be able to universalize our maxims without contradiction only yields knowledge of what is permissible and what is not permissible but not any particular acts to be performed. In addition, the criteria for judging what is permissible and not permissible, is introduced without explanation concerning the basis of this standard. All that this test provides is the argument on what a rational being can consistently will without contradiction. According to Wood, even though the practical law is a law that all rational beings have reason to follow, nothing guarantees that all rational beings would will to have everyone follow this principle.⁵⁴ The issues that Wood raises against the *formula of universal law* and the *formula of the law of nature* concern the real 'ground' of obligation in morality.

Christine Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant is that the experience of obligation is crucial to moral experience. She contends that moral judgments are *normative* and their being right is our motive for performing them. According to Korsgaard, obligation is primary in

⁵³ Ibid., §425.

⁵⁴ Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Pg. 81,

conceptualizing ethics.⁵⁵ For Korsgaard, obligation or duty refers not to the action but on the demand it places on the will of the agent. Consequently, moral judgments are norms, and so make claims on us, and this is the basis of motive for performing them.⁵⁶ The motivation in a moral action is the reasonableness of the action. The action is good because it is the law of reason and that is sufficient ground of its obligating us to performing it. This interpretation of Kant's idea of obligation is evident in W.D. Falk's discussion on "Ought and Motivation." Falk denies that any sanction is necessary for morality. He argues for the necessary connection between morality and motivation. According to Falk, the thought of what we ought to do includes the motive for doing it. In other words, if by motive is meant the reason(s) for performing a moral act, the thought that we ought to do something is a sufficient reason for doing it.⁵⁷

Despite the analysis of Kant's idea of the nature of obligation, it seems to me that Wood's criticism should not be overlooked. If his concern is on the ground of obligation, analysis of its nature does not quite meet this demand. This problem, Wood thinks, lies in the inadequacy of the *formula of the universal law* and the *formula of the law of nature* considered as such. According to Wood, the first formula and its variant are a preliminary stage of Kant's thought on moral law. He argues that the significance of the second formula lies in its capacity to address the question on the *ground* of the categorical imperative; to this formula this investigation proceeds.

⁵⁵Christine M. Korsgaard, "Kant's Analysis of Obligation: The Argument of Groundwork I," In *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Paul Guyer, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), Pg.51

⁵⁶ Ibid., Pg.52.

⁵⁷ W.D. Falk, *Ought, Reasons and Morality; The Collected Papers of W.D. Falk*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), Pg. 23.

Formula II: The Formula of Humanity as End in Itself

This formula states: “So act as to use humanity, both in your own person and in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as means.”⁵⁸ In this formula, the argument revolves around the notion of “end in itself.” With regard to this concept, Kant states: “If in life there is anything that has an absolute worth and therefore, an *end in itself*, only this can be the ground of categorical imperative.”⁵⁹ This proposition is of utmost importance to understanding Kant’s *formula of humanity*. On the basis of this supposition, he argues that humanity has an absolute worth and therefore, is an ‘end in itself’. Consequently, humanity is the ground of categorical imperative. Kant distinguishes human beings from other being, by characterizing the former as *persons* and the latter as *things*. By a *person*, Wood understands Kant to refer to a being endowed with consciousness of moral responsibility arising from a positive idea of freedom i.e., will legislating law.⁶⁰ In Kant’s view, the relation between a human being and things is such that things are always *means* to some end whereas, a rational being is an *end in itself*.

Kant’s distinction between *things* and *persons* is raises the question of man’s relation to the world. In Kant’s ethics, things are only means. On the contrary, in Heidegger’s ontology the human *Da-sein* stands in a relation of dependence on the objects. This relationship is such that the human *Da-sein* cannot be known apart from existential character of ‘being-in-the-world’. According to Heidegger, this relation is such that *Da-sein* is a being among other beings but raises itself above them in its way of being – its understanding being.⁶¹

⁵⁸Kant, *Foundation*, §429.

⁵⁹Ibid., §428.

⁶⁰ Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*, 120.

⁶¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 14.

Frank Schalow understands Heidegger's position as doing away with dualism in Kant's treatment of human relation with the world. According to Schalow, Heidegger demonstrates the interdependent relationship between the objects and the human being and at the same time allowing for transcendence by the very fact of going beyond beings in self-determination.⁶² In Heidegger's ontology, *care* is mode of being of the human being and signifies one's engagement with the objects as characteristic mode of being in the world.⁶³

Heidegger's characterization of the human being's relation with other existents is of great importance. If the approach is dualistic, the implication is that humans can choose either or not to relate to beings other than themselves. In Heidegger's strategy the human person does not have this option. The ethical significance of this position is that humans cannot destroy the world in their handling of other existents without hurting their very existence.

Concerning the idea of *end in itself*, Kant indicates that the moral activity does not preclude an object as its principle. However, the principle of the moral action cannot be a material object. According to Wood, this is why Kant distinguishes between the *formal* principle, i.e., the will's *legislative form*, and the *material* principle i.e., the material object. Only the formal principles can be laws.⁶⁴ The reason for this is that material principles fall under the idea of happiness, which Kant dismisses as obscure owing to its indeterminate nature. Based on the above distinction between formal and material principle in the action, Wood argues that for Kant, "ends" are not limited to objects effected by human activity; rather, they can be objects of the

⁶² Frank Schalow, *Renewal of the Heidegger Kant – Dialogue*, (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 251.

⁶³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §57

⁶⁴ Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 112.

will if what determines the will is not material but what is rational in which case, the ends in question are duties.⁶⁵

The implication of understanding humanity as an ‘end in itself’ is that any violation of duty either against oneself or other persons is using oneself or others not as an *end in itself* but only as a means. In the example typical of duty to others, false promising reduces the other to a means for our purposes, since the person in question cannot share in our intentions. For Kant, to treat the other as *end in itself* and not merely as *means* requires that the person share in our intention. Further, the act of false promising encroaches on the other’s freedom and property, and in so doing violates the other’s rights. The act of false promising, therefore, cannot be made into a law because it violates humanity as an *end in itself*.⁶⁶

With regard to the meritorious actions, i.e., duty to help others, Kant maintains that not to do so may not conflict with the principle of humanity as an *end in itself*. He argues that humanity can continue to exist even if no one helped others to achieve their ends. However, humanity as an *end in itself* is only negative since no one wishes to further the happiness of others. Kant maintains that the end of any person who is also an *end in itself* ought to be our end. Properly understood, therefore, humanity as an *end in itself* implies that I make other people’s well-being my goal.⁶⁷ According to Wood’s interpretation of Kant, to refuse to help has far greater repercussions than failure in our life-projects. It means that to universalize this principle is tantamount to willing that others do not help; so construed, their refusal to help conflicts with one’s view of oneself as an *end in itself*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Foundations*, §429.

⁶⁸ Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*, 150.

Based on the above argument, Kant contends that the principle of humanity as an *end in itself* is the limiting condition of freedom. In other words, humanity is the sole ground of the categorical imperative, and so it is the principle that ought to determine the exercise of freedom in human activity. Kant's view of humanity as the ground of the categorical imperative is based on his concept of a rational nature. His view is that without rational beings nothing of absolute value is possible.⁶⁹ Wood's interpretation is that the prerogative of rational nature arises from the very fact that a rational being is the source of value judgment concerning the goodness in things. Consequently, rational beings confer absolute worth on themselves both subjectively and objectively.⁷⁰

Kant's idea of human dignity as foundation for morality has been subjected to criticism from contemporary philosophers. Pertinent to this subject is Richard Rorty's criticism of Kant's idea of inherent human dignity arising from the fact of rational nature as the basis for morality. According to Rorty, there is nothing significant in human moral capacity that separates them from brutes other than historically determined facts of world culture.⁷¹ The argument here is that we do not have to presuppose such a concept as human dignity as the ground of our moral judgments for there is no such *a priori* basis. All there is, is a cultural development in the way we understand ourselves. On the basis of this understanding we come up with certain concepts such as human rights. According to Rorty, such ideas should replace the otherwise outdated concept of human dignity based on human rationality, which he believes has no effect on human moral development. Rorty's attack is directed to traditional view of morality as founded on a universal concept of "inherent human dignity" regardless of who one happens to be. According

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁷¹ Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 170.

to Rorty, this has not proved relevant for moral evil continues to ravage humanity. Rorty claims that the concept of human dignity presupposes certain knowledge of human nature but such knowledge is questionable since its presupposition has not resulted to human realization of moral ideals. Conclusively, there is no such knowledge; therefore, the concept of human dignity needs to be replaced by a ‘human rights culture’ that has its basis on sentimentalism of human suffering.⁷² The argument is that moral judgment should be based on moral feeling arising from exposure to human suffering.

Rorty’s criticism concerning human dignity as having its source in presupposed knowledge of human nature is rather inaccurate with regard to the real source of the concept of human dignity. The value of human being as such is not based on knowledge of “theories” about human nature. To value oneself in the sense in which Kant has it one does not need any theoretical analysis of human beings. Kant’s argument that this absolute valuation has its *source* from *self* and from self to other human beings is significant.

Second, Rorty’s argument for ethics based on moral feeling about human suffering rather than view of human dignity is also problematic. If this were the basis of moral judgment there is no basis for blaming those who are not moved by human suffering since sentimentalism cannot be an obligation. If sentiments were a factor in our moral decision, the one inflicting the suffering is the closest to see the suffering but yet this does not alter the decision of a sadist. The moral decision is not about what one feels but about acting according to what is right regardless of what sentiments one harbors. Most importantly, it is not what one feels that determines what is moral/immoral but what one does regardless of what sentiments one harbors.

The fundamental question is how to understand the rational nature’s absolute worth as presented in Kant’s *formula of humanity*, since setting ends is simply an exercise of freedom but

⁷² Ibid., 172.

not necessarily with moral considerations. There are two views of rationality for Kant: the first is the capacity for self-determination in the practical sense, i.e., ability to set ends and willing the means to accomplish them. On the other hand, there is a view of rationality from the perspective of *autonomy*. According to Allison, the rationality in the *formula of humanity as end in itself* refers to the latter. In Rorty's criticism of Kant's view of rationality as ground of morality, it seems to me that Rorty's view is limited to the first view. In the following analysis this study will focus on human rationality from the perspective of autonomy. the content of the third formula.

Formula III: The Formula of Autonomy

This formula is regarded as the most plausible argument as the ground of the categorical imperative. It states, "So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal laws through its maxim."⁷³ The derivative of this formula is: "So act as if you were always through your maxims a law-giving member in a universal *Kingdom of Ends*."⁷⁴ Kant argues that this formula arises from the *formula of universal law* and that of *humanity as end in itself*. Following Kant, Wood points out the important relationship between the last two formulas and the *formula of autonomy*. According to Wood, the basis of the categorical imperative is the principle of the rational being. The latter is the principle grounding the value of a rational nature as the supreme authority, making objective universal law that commands absolutely. Wood contends that the notion of the rational will as a legislator of universal laws carries with it the idea of autonomy.⁷⁵

⁷³Kant, *Foundations*, §434.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, §438.

⁷⁵Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Pg. 158.

The *formula of autonomy* regards the will of every rational being as a legislator of the universal moral law. According to Kant, the will obeys the law of which it is the author in reason. He contends that in order to legislate a universal law, the rational being must be determined by this same law if it is to avoid heteronomy, i.e., different principles determining the will. Kant believes that if interests determine the will, we would require another law to render universality to a moral maxim.⁷⁶ He argues that interests are individual; therefore, if the basis of moral action is the individual interest, every action would have individual interests as its determining principle. Consequently, there would be no universality of the law as there would be as many principles as there are interests. On the other hand, if the will of every rational being is the legislator, the law would be universal, since the principle is the same, that of categorical imperative. The law of reason as demanded by the principle of autonomy is based on unconditioned principle, that of freedom from external laws such as objects of desire or external legislation. This formula is based on the premise that the rational will is the author of its own laws, i.e., the autonomy of the rational will. Kant points out that autonomy of a rational will would be negative if it would only mean independence from external determination. In Kant's terms, a free will in terms of lawlessness would be meaningless.⁷⁷ For a rational will to be autonomous in a positive sense, the will must operate according to a law that it legislates, such that the obligation is self-imposed. Consequently, the rational will is both the *subject* and *author* of the moral law.

Jean Jacques Rousseau is the precursor of the idea of “universal legislation” in his *Social Contract*. According to Rousseau, humans cannot survive in the state of nature. This is because

⁷⁶ Kant, *Foundations*, §431.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, §446.

there are obstacles that make their self-preservation impossible for individuals intrude on what human beings can devote to self-preservation.⁷⁸

The state of nature in its worst scenario is described in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. In the state of nature one's life is comparable to the time of war. Human beings are enemies to one another, and the only security is one's power and what innovation can provide. In Hobbes view, in such a state "*....there is no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.*"⁷⁹

Rousseau's claim is that in this state of nature human beings destroy one another and cannot survive. He argues that for human survival, it is necessary for people to unify their power and freedom, in Rousseau's view, their means of *self-preservation*. Rousseau's important question is whether there is a way in which one can surrender these two means of *self-preservation* without jeopardizing one's security. According to Rousseau, the 'Social Contract' can meet this need. In this state the individual person and his property can be defended. Further, though each member in the association obeys, one remains free for one only obeys one's own laws by virtue of participation in the general will.⁸⁰ The argument here is that since the law expresses the will of a people, in adhering to the law, one is obeying the collective will of which one is a part. In Rousseau's argument, he does not seem to recognize that the 'Social Contract' is as shaky a principle as any other. The social contract cannot solve the social evils as easily as Rousseau envisions. It is based on human freedom that can chose not to go along with this contract.

⁷⁸ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, (Chicago, Illinois: The Henry Regney Company, 1954), Bk.I, Ch. 1.

⁷⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, New York, NY: The Crowell – Collier Publishing Company, 1962), Pg. 100.

⁸⁰ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Bk. I, Ch. 1.

Paton points to the significance of the idea of rational beings' legislative capacity. He contends that the crucial point is that setting ends is characteristic of freedom. Consequently, a rational will can be coerced into actions that are means to some end but it cannot be forced to make those ends its ends, for to make something one's end is necessarily an act of a free will. It follows that an obligatory *end* such as to treat a human being as *end in itself* must have the agent as the *source* of such a law to which one is a subject.⁸¹ Cassirer's understanding of Kant's notion of "autonomy" of the will is that to be free and being under the moral law are one and the same thing.⁸²

Schopenhauer's criticism against Kant is that there is inconsistency in Kant's idea of freedom of the will and at the same time prescribing the *moral ought* to it. Concerning the will, Schopenhauer states:

...the will is not only free, but even almighty; from it not only comes its action but also its world; and as the will is, so does its action appear, so does its world appear, both are its knowledge... The will determines and therewith its action and its world also; for besides it, there is nothing, and these are the will itself. Only thus is the will truly autonomous⁸³

From the above text it is evident that the two thinkers have different views about the will. For Schopenhauer, the will is what underlies any expression of force be it human action or in nature.⁸⁴ Despite this characterization however, it is still not possible to conceive of what the will is. Since one cannot have a positive understanding of what will is in Schopenhauer's terms, it is difficult to grant his argument. In Kant's view however, will is capacity to act according to understanding laws of reason's own making and so it is an intellectual capacity. Although both thinkers speak of the *thing in itself*, yet the two have different concept of it. The *thing in itself* of Kant, which could not be discovered through the theoretical reason is discovered through the

⁸¹Paton, XVII, §2.

⁸² Cassirer, 250.

⁸³Schopenhauer, 272.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 110.

practical reason as freedom and God as is evident in Kant's postulates of pure reason. On the whole, these two views give different conceptions of human being. For Kant, his idea of the will as law legislating capacity results in the concept of human dignity. With Schopenhauer's view of the will, we cannot arrive at this view of human nature, for an individual has no value; only the species has value.⁸⁵ Further, Kant's view of the will is only in relation to moral law. For Schopenhauer, the will is *everything* including the world. This is far too confusing a concept.

The essence of the idea of *autonomy* of the will and its ambiguity is captured by Beck's remark:

Man is the only being in the world that not only is he a manifestation of some universals but ought to be an instance of others; he is an individual that gives no valid laws to others that he does not lay upon himself, that gives no privileges to himself, that he does not give to others.⁸⁶

This supposition of the rational being as the author of his own laws raises certain issues: first, human history attests to human beings' failure to live up to the principle of "humanity as *end in itself*", which according to Kant, has the rational nature as its source. The greatest evil against humanity is perpetrated by the human beings themselves. If indeed humans are the source of this law, how does it happen that they are at the same time unwilling to live up to this principle? The moral evil in human existence is an indication that humanity is not always willing to treat one another as *end in itself*. Hence, it remains a question how Kant's categorical imperative or Rousseau's idea of *Social Contract* can be reconciled with the *self-destructive* tendency in human nature.

As already indicated, the *Social Contract* as an expression of the will of a people, is meant to be a remedy to the human predicament mentioned above. Kant tells us that the principle

⁸⁵Ibid., 276.

⁸⁶ Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), Ch. XI, §10.

of autonomy has a derivative formula meant to ensure the validity of the principle of autonomy. This formula is the focus of the proceeding discussion.

Derivative of Formula III: The Formula of the Realm of Ends

By the *Realm of Ends* is meant the *system* of laws uniting rational beings as legislators and members in the *Kingdom of Ends*. This formula is related to the *formula of autonomy* in the sense that it is concerned with universal purposes. For this reason, the *formula of the Realm of Ends* abstracts from particular interests and forms a unity of ends connected *systematically* despite particular individual ends. Consequently, the *Realm of Ends* is only possible under the principle of *humanity as end in itself*, for under this principle they all ought to act.⁸⁷

Kant argues that rational subjects belong to the *Realm of Ends* both as members by virtue of their capacity to legislate universal laws, and as sovereign because they are subject to laws of their own will and not of any other legislator. He contends that this legislation is only possible through a free will whether by membership or sovereignty. This last proposition is important in understanding Kant's idea of the *Kingdom of Ends*. Freedom for Kant, which is the locus of universal legislation implies universal reciprocal coercion and is consistent with the freedom of every member according to universal laws. According to Kant, the essence of justice is awareness of every person's obligation under the law.⁸⁸ In Rousseau's terms, if the public agreement is not to be an illusion, there is a condition without which all other agreements based on it are bound to fail. This condition is that in the event that an individual refuses to obey the

⁸⁷ Kant, *Foundations*, § 433.

⁸⁸ Idem, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, trans. John Ladd, Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965), §232.

will of the people, one must be constrained to do so; in Rousseau's terms, one must be "forced to be free."⁸⁹

Morality, therefore, is based on relating one's action to legislation of a will under which condition only is the *Kingdom of Ends* possible. Under this principle, all actions must accord with universal laws as their criterion, and this means to act under the notion of the will as the legislator of the universal law. The idea of a rational being as *end in itself*, derives from the legislative capacity whose law is to treat every maxim of the will as legislating laws to other rational wills and to self.⁹⁰

Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant's idea of the *Kingdom of Ends* is that it is an agreement to join others in the *Kingdom of Ends*. The hallmark in the *Kingdom of Ends* is reciprocity in holding one another responsible; in her view, treating the other as a *person*. According to Korsgaard, reciprocity is an essential characteristic in human friendships and extends to the political domain of human life. She contends that social contract is an 'enforced reciprocity' that people agree on in order to exist together as free citizens.⁹¹ The significance of Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant's formula lies in what is implied by universal legislation. In her view, this legislation has two aspects. On the one hand, it means making other peoples' ends one's ends. On the other hand, it means that in choosing one's ends, these ends must be such that they can be other people's ends. When extended to the *Kingdom of Ends*, individual ends become objects of universal legislation through communal will. Korsgaard maintains that only through this *reciprocity* is one's autonomy realizable.⁹² I consider Korsgaard's analysis as extremely important not only in individual relations but also in the political sphere. In her

⁸⁹Rousseau, Bk. I, Ch. 7.

⁹⁰ Kant, *Foundations*, §434.

⁹¹Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, 192.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 193.

argument, she restricts the choice of one's ends to what is adaptable by others, for only in this way can individual ends be other people's ends. In the best political structures, individuals fair better when their ends are a will of the people, such as is the case in democratic governments.

B

KANT'S DEFENSE OF FREEDOM

Freedom has been a central problem in philosophy and has continued to be up to our contemporary times. It is also an issue in everyday life because it extends to every facet of human actions. When all aspects of human activities are in harmonious relation, the idea of freedom is taken for granted; but as soon as this harmony is disrupted by human conduct, the question of what the individual(s) *ought* to have done is directed towards the person(s); implying by this that the individual(s) have the capacity to do otherwise. Although Kant asserts that the idea of *freedom* cannot be empirically proven, he also insists that the human person cannot act except under the idea of freedom; that means, freedom defines the very essence of human being in such a way that there is no other in which way a rational being can be understood. What is at risk in Kant's deduction of freedom is morality; it stands or falls to the degree in which, the fact of freedom of rational will is accepted.

In order to understand Kant's idea of freedom, it is important to examine this notion in his first *Critique*. In the latter, Kant distinguishes two kinds of causalities: causality according to nature and causality through freedom. With regard to the former, Kant contends that the idea of causality is indispensable to the possibility of human experience. According to Kant, all occurrences take place according to the law of connection of cause and effect and this is according to a rule. That is to say, for every occurrence in time, there is an antecedent state and

this succession is a matter of necessity. Therefore, the category of cause as a synthetic *a priori* concept is indispensable for our experience of the world.⁹³

In the antinomy of pure reason, Kant contrasts the ideas of causality according to the law of nature, which he characterizes as the condition of occurrences with the cause's unconditioned causality, which he conceives as freedom.⁹⁴ Based on this distinction, he contends that the causal law of nature is not the only cause responsible for the events in the world but that we must assume the causality through freedom.⁹⁵ Kant argues that the law of nature is such that every event presupposes the preceding state. However, the cause itself is also an occurrence in time so that it too is caused. According to Kant, this causality also presupposes the previous state according to the law of nature and so on, *ad infinitum*. Kant holds that if this chain of causes and their causality go on indefinitely, there would be no beginning and no completeness in the series of the causes. In other words, all we have are intermediate occurrences in the series. But because the law of nature demands that every occurrence be preceded by a previous state, this leads to a contradiction since the last state in the series needs explanation, i.e., a sufficient reason for its occurrence. According to Kant, we must admit the causality through freedom, meaning by this the absolute *spontaneity* of causes to begin a state without reference to a preceding event.⁹⁶

Sadic Al-Azm interprets Kant's argument in the antinomies as pertaining to freedom quite apart from a moral problem. He identifies Kant's problem as cosmological, i.e., causal determinism and the polemics surrounding this whole issue. In his reading of Kant's third antinomy, Al-Azm does not deny the moral repercussion such as "freedom of the will" that arise from the denial of *transcendental freedom*. However, a moral problem does not encompass

⁹³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A198/B243

⁹⁴Ibid., A419/B447.

⁹⁵Ibid., A444/B472.

⁹⁶Ibid., A446/B474.

Kant's whole problem in the third antinomy.⁹⁷ Kant articulates this position in his view of freedom as power to begin a state by itself i.e., spontaneously.⁹⁸ The point is that the causality through freedom does not refer to an existing state in turn but is absolute in initiating the series.

The issue of freedom is one of the thorny issues in Kant's philosophy as a whole. As is shown in the succeeding chapters, Fichte and Hegel hold that Kant does not have a proper account of the problem of freedom as he limits it to moral aspect of the human being. In his retrieval of Kant's transcendental philosophy, Heidegger revisits this complex problem. In his reading of Heidegger, Schalow points out that Heidegger's view of freedom is that it belongs to the problem of the world. However, he argues that Kant's limitation in his treatment of freedom lies in his presentation of the two realities, the world and freedom as though they can exist separately. According to Schalow nature and freedom are not separate entities but that nature is manifestation of freedom.⁹⁹ I take it that this criticism refers to Kant's distinction between a *cause* i.e., (nature) and a cause's 'unconditioned causality' (freedom) referred to in the first *Critique*.¹⁰⁰

In this issue, it seems to me that Kant's account of the reality of the two causes does not indicate separation though this cannot be ruled out. In this account, the argument is more about the dependence of the 'conditioned cause' on the 'unconditioned causality' such that the conditioned cannot exist without the unconditioned causality. However, Kant is also clear that the unconditioned causality is not dependent on what it causes; therefore, the implied separation can also be inferred. He argues that if A is the cause of the being of B and C, A can exist without

⁹⁷Sadic Al-Azm, *The Beginning of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies*, (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 89

⁹⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A533/B562.

⁹⁹ Frank Schalow, *The Renewal of The Heidegger-Kant Dialogue*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 291.

¹⁰⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A419/B447.

B but the reverse is *not* possible because the possibility of the first item on the series is not dependent on the second or third.¹⁰¹

The point here is that Kant's argument on freedom refers to the efficient cause and the effect thereof. However, to argue that the efficient cause cannot exist apart from effect is to place both efficient cause and its effect on equal footing. I argue that if by freedom Kant implies the efficient causality, on which everything else on the series of causes depends, his argument that its possibility does not depend on the effect is valid. This is because while the effect come to be in time, the efficient cause must be prior to its effect. One can argue that nature is the only causality there is. The question is, would this explanation meet the reason's demand for ultimate principle underlying all reality? Alternatively, one can argue that nature and freedom is one and the same thing. The main issue is to determine whether freedom can exist prior to its manifestation in nature. For Kant, however, *transcendental freedom* implies distinct not separate causality through freedom being prior to causality of nature wherein, all the intermediate terms in the series depend on the first term. If nature depends on the efficient cause in any given moment, then it is difficult to speak of separation for that which is dependent would cease to exist.

My view is that two realities can be distinct without being separate and human being is a manifestation of such a reality. Through our rational power we know that human body is *distinct* from the principle that keeps it alive but the two realities are *not* separate. Once the two are separate, the living body ceases to be since it depends on that principle. Further, human beings also know that the *principle* of life is not human *product* otherwise they would produce it at will when they most need it but they are not capable of doing so. Consequently, we must assume that the principle of life is distinct from the human body such that that source must prior to the body.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., B437/A411.

As Thomas Aquinas argues, it does not belong to bodies to be alive.¹⁰² This analogy could apply to freedom. We can distinguish freedom if by this we mean the efficient causality, from its manifestation without separating them.

Although the overall problem in the antinomies is cosmological, Kant immediately points out the fundamental relation between the *transcendental freedom* with *practical freedom*. This is evident in his claim “...*transcendental* idea of *freedom* is the basis of the notion of practical freedom.” Consequently, what is problematic in “freedom of the will” is the possibility of *transcendental freedom*. *Practical freedom* is defined as the “power of choice” without being necessitated by sense objects. This implies that rational beings have the capacity to determine themselves apart from impulse. Based on this premise, Kant argues that we cannot do away with the idea of *transcendental freedom* without doing away with “freedom of the will” at the same time.¹⁰³

Allison’s reading of Kant’s position on freedom of the will is that Kant’s concern is freedom of will as such, irrespective of morality. He argues that freedom of the will interpenetrates all human actions. Based on the fact of freedom of the will in general, Kant uses the latter premise to ground morality.¹⁰⁴ The significance of Kant’s strategy lies in the fact that to accept the fact of freedom outside of moral consideration, which all humans do, means that one cannot deny its corollary, the moral freedom. Allison contends that although the practical freedom is empirical it has a transcendental dimension, characterized as the *absolute spontaneity* of action and this is the only basis for “imputability” of the action on the agent. He contends that the notion of *transcendental freedom* admits of free agency, and this introduces the idea of

¹⁰² Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Man*, trans. James E. Anderson, Englewood Cliffs, N. J: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962), Q. LXXV, art. 1.

¹⁰³ Ibid., A534/562.

¹⁰⁴ Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Freedom*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 35.

“unconditioned causality.”¹⁰⁵ What is needed is an account of the relationship between *transcendental* and *practical* freedom. In order to adequately defend the idea of freedom of the rational will, the above problem must be addressed.

In view of the relationship between *transcendental* and *practical freedom*, Allison distinguishes two kinds of beginnings: “beginning in time” and “beginning in causality.” He argues that while both causalities are attributable to the divine, only the “beginning in causality” can be attributed to free agency.¹⁰⁶ What Allison means is that nothing is prior to the divine with respect to time. In addition, the divine also is the “beginning in causality” as the divine causality does not refer to a preceding cause. On the contrary, free agency like that of rational nature is a “beginning in causality” since it can spontaneously initiate events in the world without referring to the preceding state. However, free agents are not prior in time, as finite rational beings presuppose a cause other than themselves. Allison argues that in both cases, that is to say, “beginning in time” and “beginning in causality” it is necessary to recognize the causality through freedom even if its possibility is not conceivable.

Allison’s conclusion here is quite ambiguous . It seems to indicate that freedom cannot be accounted for but can be accepted as a fact. This position however, is precarious. As Kant points out in his first *Critique*, any proposition without justification is subject to counterattack by equally strong proposition.¹⁰⁷ In this respect, Allison’s position is vulnerable.

Allison contends that there are two aspects in the nature of action: first, actions are beginning in causality; meaning by this, a free agent is absolute beginning in every action. Second, in every free action the fundamental idea is the “resolution and the act.” Consequently,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B23.

the decision to act is central because this marks the beginning of a new series. According to Allison, the problem involved in Kant's position of free agency pertains to the fact that both beginning in time and causality are not empirical; hence, they can be dismissed as empty ideas. In addition, even if the possibility of a first beginning is granted, it may not be possible to apply it in nature because of the conflict in holding these two positions. Based on these two problems, Kant resorts to a distinction between empirical and intelligible nature of free agency.¹⁰⁸

Allison characterizes the polemics concerning Kant's theory of freedom as compatibility of freedom with natural causality on one hand, and incompatibility of freedom with natural causality on the other. The former position holds that it is possible to be free and necessitated at the same time. In this view the action is only understood in terms of a preceding state. If the preceding state and conditions are not taken into account, then the agent is said to act without reason. Further, the compatibility view argues that if the action is not causally connected to the previous state or disposition of the agent, it cannot rightly be ascribed to the agent.¹⁰⁹ The question then concerns the criterion for attributing the action to the agent. Allison argues that for a given action to be imputed on the agent, there is 'activity requirement'; meaning by this, that the agent actually performs the act as opposed to "being acted on". The second requirement is that the action must be explainable in terms of the agent's nature, which means the necessity of accounting for the why of the action. Based on the above requirements, Allison contends that the 'activity requirement' can only be met within the view of incompatibility, i.e., *transcendental freedom*.¹¹⁰ This means that, Kant must resolve the problem of how one and the same agent can be said to be free on the transcendental level and determined on the empirical level.

¹⁰⁸ Allison, 27.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 28.

Allison's interpretation of Kant is that for a causal agent to be so conceived, it must have a determinate "mode with which it operates" without which it cannot be designated as cause, as there would be no basis for assigning such a causality to a given effect. Further, an empirical causal agent must comply to the rule of possible experience. However, certain agents can be ascribed both empirical and intelligible character, in which case the intelligible character of such agents cannot be explicated in terms of conditions of time, a necessary condition for experience. Following from Kant's analysis of analogies, this agent cannot be determined by an antecedent state.¹¹¹ I take it that Allison is referring to the idea that the rational being's actions cannot be explained in terms of a preceding state because there are no alterations in terms of before and after on the intellectual principle as on objects of experience; therefore, Kant's doctrine of human freedom is based on his view of the will as such. With regard to human actions Kant states:

"Everything in nature works according to law; only a rational being has the *capacity* of acting according to the conception of laws. This capacity is the will."¹¹²

This proposition is fundamental for understanding Kant's theory of freedom and the resultant moral responsibility. His moral theory is grounded on the idea of pure practical reason, that is, freedom of the will. It follows that to act according to conception of the laws the will must be free to choose between one course of action among others. The significance of Kant's argument is that it does not actually refer to moral concerns but simply on ordinary human activities; that is, he is appealing to what we are ordinarily aware of. Kant's thesis is that "pure reason is practical" and only from this presupposition is morality conceivable in Kant's

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kant, *Foundations*, §412.

terms of the categorical imperative. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he contends that practical freedom is concerned with what *ought* to occur even if it does not take place.¹¹³ The point here is that since rational beings set ends, the practical reason is concerned with imperatives necessary for realizing these ends. In the *Foundations*, Kant's view of the will of a rational being is that it is a causality through its freedom.¹¹⁴

Beck's analysis of Kant's thought sheds light on the idea of freedom of the will as a causality in the distinction between actor/spectator perspectives. In Beck's view, the agent is related to his action as an actor and not as a spectator who is not involved in the action. Beck adds that unlike an actor in a drama, the agent is not an imitator; rather, the rational agent deliberates his actions. Beck characterizes the act of human deliberation as "taking thought." Consequently, this "taking thought" is the basic cause of human actions and the two are inseparable. According to Beck, deliberation is an intentional search for sound reason(s) for choosing one course of action among other possibilities.¹¹⁵ According to Beck, from the perspective of the agent, the process of decision-making (deliberation) is an important experience. In this the agent understands the difference one's thinking process makes. Above all, one experiences one's freedom and realizes oneself as the author of his own actions rather than obeying extrinsic laws. Beck maintains that the human agents always act according to the implications of their actions based on self-knowledge, the world and the idea that deliberation makes a difference in their actions. As a result, humans always act according to principles and not impulse. Beck contends that Kant is not denying the effect of our drives on our actions; rather, he is denying that human beings are at the mercy of these drives. He is arguing that reason

¹¹³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A534/B562.

¹¹⁴ Idem, *Foundations*, §446.

¹¹⁵ Beck, Ch. III, §1.

interpenetrates all our human actions and determines how we respond. Conception of laws and patterns, and actions based on that conception are not based on mere imitation of experience, but are grounded on our understanding, the *practical reason*.¹¹⁶ We are now in position to relate this freedom of will with obligation to moral law.

Kant's position is that granted that the will is free, i.e., in the sense explicated above we must find a law sufficient to determine it necessarily. He contends that the object of a subjective principle can only be given to us empirically. However, freedom of the will must mean independence from empirical determination, i.e., sensibility.¹¹⁷ Since in Kant's view a lawless will is meaningless, a free will must nevertheless be determined by a law but not a material law. Kant argues that all that is left for the law to determine the will is the legislative form; i.e., the will making universal laws. Consequently, the maxim of law is a legislative principle and can determine the will independent of the object of desire. In Kant's view, freedom and moral law imply each other such that the relation between them is reciprocal.¹¹⁸

Kant's argument in this proposition is crucial; it is the crux of his deduction of the possibility of the categorical imperative as indicated in the principle of autonomy. According to Kant, it is *not* freedom that is immediately known to us, for the only freedom we know is freedom in a negative sense, i.e., independence from natural determination. According to Kant, it is the moral law that reveals the fact of freedom because we represent this law to ourselves as rational and therefore, obligatory.¹¹⁹

Kant distinguishes between *practical freedom* and *transcendental freedom*. In the first *Critique*, *practical freedom* is the capacity for self-determination, a capacity to act on

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Ch. III, §2.

¹¹⁷ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Bk. I, Sec. 26, §6.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

imperatives. *Transcendental freedom* as required by the principle of autonomy, demands complete independence from empirical determination, which is the principle of heteronomy as the latter is concerned with the best means to achieve the desired object. In *transcendental freedom*, the basis of choice is not impulse but universal legislation.¹²⁰

Allison's reading of Kant is that from the perspective of *transcendental freedom*, material object is not sufficient to establish the autonomy of the rational will unless the subjective side of the actions accords with dictates of practical law, valid unconditionally for all rational beings. *Transcendental freedom*, therefore, bridges the gap between the concept of the practical law and moral law defined by Kant. In other words, the law of freedom i.e., the practical law, and the categorical imperative are connected by autonomous legislation of moral agents. According to Allison, we cannot affirm our freedom and reject the categorical imperative.¹²¹

According to Beck's view of Kant's idea of autonomy, freedom manifests itself in one's consciousness of obligation. Beck argues that if freedom were to be understood as freedom from determinism, it would have a negative meaning. Positively understood, freedom is spontaneity of freely legislating laws. Understood this way, freedom or autonomy is not a matter of power to begin a new series; rather, it is the source of law, which the agent follows in commencing the series. According to Beck, consciousness of moral law rather than obedience to it is freedom in its positive meaning.¹²² He points out the significance of Kant's proposition in the *Foundations*. According to Kant, "a being who cannot act except under the idea of freedom is free in a practical sense even if theoretically this cannot be proven."¹²³

¹²⁰ Allison, 208.

¹²¹ Ibid., 213.

¹²² Ibid., Ibid., Ch. XI, §9.

¹²³ Kant, *Foundation*, §448.

Kant's position that freedom is cannot be proven theoretically leaves certain problems. Some thinkers criticize Kant's doctrine on freedom as being involved in a 'vicious circle' arising from reciprocity between freedom and morality; that is freedom is deduced from the moral law and the moral law from freedom.

To avoid this problem Kant resorts to the argument on the distinction between phenomenal and to intelligible aspect of the moral agent. The consequence of this position is that human beings are free in so far as they are intelligent beings. However, since they also belong to the natural world, they are subject to causal laws. This position raises a serious problem of holding both that the human actions as both free and determined, which is a contradiction in terms. According to Allison, Beck's reconstruction of Kant's account of freedom in human actions is significant. Beck contends that ordinarily, we do not view human action as both determined and free at the same time; therefore, a theoretical account of human actions as both free and determined is superfluous.¹²⁴

I think Beck's reconstruction is valid in the sense that he demonstrates how Kant's position is untenable. However, this yet does not quite answer the question concerning how we arrive at the concept of freedom. In this respect, Schopenhauer's critique of Kant's account of freedom is important. For Schopenhauer, humans do not arrive at freedom through speculative idea of unconditioned causality, or indirectly through the moral law; rather, we know this fact immediately in our consciousness.¹²⁵ The problem with this position is that it not yet clear what Schopenhauer characterizes as *will*; therefore, it is impossible to grant his argument concerning its freedom. As indicated above Kant and Schopenhauer have quite different views of the will.

¹²⁴ Allison, 72.

¹²⁵ Schopenhauer, 504.

As we shall see in Chapter two of this study, the question of freedom become one of the major issue in Fichte's philosophy in his effort to resolve Kant's problem.

C

THE POSTULATES OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON

Kant's definition of a postulate is, " a theoretical proposition, which is not demonstrable, but which is inseparable inference of an *a priori* unconditionally valid practical law."¹²⁶ The central point in this definition is that a postulate is a synthetic *a priori* idea inferred from the concept of the moral law. Owing to the *a priori* nature of this a postulate, it is not demonstrable. However, although a postulate is an indemonstrable proposition it does not follow that it is an empty idea. According to Kant, it follows necessarily from the idea of the moral law. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant posits three such postulates: the idea of freedom, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God.¹²⁷ Kant's claim is that the relationship connecting the "postulates of pure practical reason" is neither logical nor empirical; rather, these "practical propositions" and how they are related to each other is a *synthetic a priori proposition*.

The Highest Good

Kant argues that in its practical use, reason seeks the "supreme principle," - the unconditioned principle of human conduct. This unconditioned principle is the *highest good*, which comprises morality and happiness and is the proper object of pure practical reason; therefore, it determines the will of a rational being.¹²⁸

¹²⁶Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, §123.

¹²⁷ Ibid., §133.

¹²⁸ Ibid., §108.

Kant contends that the moral law is the ultimate determining ground of the will. Since the *highest good* is realized through the moral law, the moral law determines the will. According to Kant, though the *highest good* is the sole object of the will, it is not the determining ground of the will; rather, the moral law does determine the will and this must be the case if we have to avoid heteronomy.¹²⁹ Kant argues that the moral law is the “supreme condition” of the possibility of the *highest good*. Consequently, its realization is the determining ground of the will. For Kant, morality is a component of the idea of the *highest good*; hence, no other object determines the will as demanded by the principle of autonomy.¹³⁰

The problem with the above position is, since morality and happiness are both *components* of the “highest good,” it is not clear why morality by itself is said to determine the will rather than both since they are already connected. In other words, it is impossible to tell why the will’s object is the moral law detached from happiness yet, Kant already argues that morality is the condition of the *highest good*, which comprises morality and happiness. As such Kant’s argument concerning the relation of morality and happiness is rather confusing.

Concerning the relation of happiness to morality, Kant holds that happiness is in the deserving of it. He contends that virtue is the supreme condition of all that is “good” and worthiness to be happy.¹³¹ This claim has two points: first, whatever goods we pursue, their being good depends on a *good will*, which manifests itself in virtue. Second, Kant indicates that it is not sufficient to be in possession of “happiness,” one must be *worthy* of it, i.e., one must deserve it through a virtuous life. Based on the idea of the “highest good” as a ‘whole’ comprising virtue and happiness, Kant contends that virtue is *not* the whole and perfect good. As humans, we need happiness. This agrees not only with human judgment but also with judgment

¹²⁹ Ibid., §109.

¹³⁰ Ibid., §110.

of impartial being who considers the dignity and worth of rational beings. According to Kant, to be in need of happiness and to be worthy of it and not possess it is contrary to the desire of an omnipotent rational being; therefore, virtue and happiness together make up the *highest good*, and *happiness* is given in proportion to virtue. Kant insists that although happiness is a “good” it is not an *absolute* good since its characterization as a “good” is contingent on a moral will.¹³² I take this to mean that since anyone, even a sadist can claim to be happy, it matters whether the happiness is derived from moral conduct.

With regard to the relationship between virtue to happiness, Kant contends that this relation can be understood in either of the two ways; as logical or as cause and effect. In the former relation to seek virtue is to seek happiness, just as in logic, the conclusion necessarily follows after the premise(s). Kant denies that the relation of morality to happiness, which are constituents of the *highest good*, is not logical. That is to say, this relation is not analytical such that one concept is contained in the other. In the latter relation, in seeking virtue, something radically different, i.e., happiness, results. In this relation, the concept of virtue does *not* include the idea of happiness.¹³³ According to Kant, the *highest good* is a *synthetic a priori practical* concept that necessarily combines the two ideas, virtue and happiness. Consequently, the justification of this relationship is *transcendental*; that is, *a priori* connecting virtue and happiness through a practical principle.¹³⁴ According to this proposition, the *highest good* is a practical possibility, i.e., it is realized through free human conduct. Consequently, virtue and happiness are *a priori* necessarily connected, such that virtue cannot be thought by a practical reason without happiness.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., §111.

¹³⁴ Ibid., Ch. II, §113.

Kant posits that either *desire* for happiness is the principle for virtue, or virtue is the efficient cause for happiness. The first is *not* possible since the determining ground is inclination and *not* moral principle, which for Kant, is worthiness to be happy. The second proposition is also impossible for cause and effect, as relations between virtue and happiness do not coincide in this world. This is because we cannot connect cause and effect as a result of determination of the will; this is *not* dependent on ‘moral intention,’ but on knowledge of laws of nature and our ability to use them to achieve happiness. Kant holds that such knowledge is beyond finite rational beings.¹³⁵

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant argues that we are commanded to further the highest good.¹³⁶ For Kant, furthering the *highest good* through the practical reason is to connect “virtue” and “happiness” *a priori* as a necessary object of the will. According to Kant, if the *highest good* is not possible, the moral law is also false, and the command to further the *highest good* is in vain. Since the *highest good* includes the idea of virtue and happiness, and virtue is worthiness to be happy, the *highest good* is a possibility through freedom.¹³⁷ Kant’s claim is that the moral agent belongs to the world of nature since one’s acts are performed in the sensible world. As an intelligent being however, the agent also belongs to the intelligible world. Owing to the *phenomenal* and *noumenal* dimensions of the moral agent, moral intention can only indirectly cause happiness in the world as an effect. For Kant the relationship between morality and happiness is mediated by the author of nature.¹³⁸ What is problematic here is separation between the moral action and happiness such that the unity of morality and happiness is reserved for Divine mediation.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Idem, *Critique of Judgment*, §469.

¹³⁷ Idem, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ch. II, §114.

¹³⁸ Ibid., Ch. II, §115.

The Immortality of the Soul

Kant begins this argument by referring to the idea of the *highest good* as the necessary object of the will under the moral law. He argues that *complete harmony* of the *will* with the *moral law* is the ultimate condition of the realization the *highest good*. However, no finite rational being is capable of such perfection in this world. In his *Religion*, Kant points out to the rational nature's propensity to evil. For Kant, this is a natural disposition and is the greatest obstacle to moral development in the rational nature.¹³⁹ According to Kant, since furthering of the *highest good* is commanded, its realization is only possible through an endless striving towards complete harmony of will with the moral law. For this endless striving to be possible, we must assume that the rational soul is immortal. Consequently, the *highest good* is only possible under the supposition of immortality of the soul.¹⁴⁰

Kant's position of endless striving for complete harmony of will with the moral law is problematic. First, the question of *endless striving* is contingent on whether or not one takes the *highest good* to be realized in the moral action. Further, since all that a finite rational being can do is strive for the moral goal, virtue in Kant's sense is impossible because for him all we can do is approximate a remote goal of realizing virtue. Consequently, if there is happiness it is given because to strive for virtue is equated to its possession. It seems in this argument Kant modifies his earlier position on happiness as being accorded in proportion to virtue.

Consequently, this argument collapses his earlier position that happiness is in the deserving of it through virtue. The question the is whether or not there is possibility of conceiving virtue in a different way. In the subsequent chapters this possibility will be explored.

¹³⁹ Idem, *Religion Within the Limits Of Reason Alone*, Theodore M. Green & Hoyt H. Hudson, trans. (La Salle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1960), Bk. I, §II.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Ch. III, §123.

The following section examines Kant's last postulate whose significance in his ethical theory cannot be underestimated.

The Existence of God

In the idea of the *highest good*, Kant argues that it includes morality and happiness, and that happiness is given in proportion to virtue. According to Kant, complete justice of granting happiness in proportion to virtue is only possible by impartial reason. God is the only cause who can bring about the coincidence of virtue and happiness in just proportion. Consequently, we must assume the existence of God as a necessary presupposition for the possibility of the *highest good*, i.e., the harmony of moral law with our will and also coincidence of virtue with happiness. According to Kant, the moral subject is not the cause of nature; therefore, one cannot, through the will cause the necessary connection between morality and happiness in proportion to virtue.¹⁴¹

The practical reason, however, must strive to further the *highest good*, thus effecting the necessary connection between virtue and happiness. Kant contends that we must assume a *cause* of nature, who is distinct from it and accords with the moral law. The best of the world, i.e., a derived good must presuppose the original *highest good* and that is, God, in whom happiness and moral law coincide.¹⁴² Kant maintains that although it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God, this assumption is only subjective; therefore, not a duty as we cannot be commanded to assume the existence of something. Most importantly, Kant insists that the existence of God must *not* to be understood as the ground of validity of duty; the validity of duty

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., §125.

arises *not* from the idea of God *but* from the principle of autonomy, i.e., will as legislating its own laws.¹⁴³

D

EVALUATION OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

One of controversial proposition in Kant's moral theory is his argument that if moral action is to have any moral value, it must be done *not* only 'according to duty', but 'for the sake of duty.' That means it ought not to consider the end of action, but simply the form of the action, or its universality. What is problematic in this position is that it seems indifferent to individual nature, circumstances or individual good. The question this theory presents is whether or not this kind morality is possible. My answer is negative. Human actions cannot be detached from their personal end, for concern for self accompanies all that we do. Even if we make human being *end in itself* as the second formula proposes, this still has to take into account the rational nature's ends. As Kant has it, pure duty for duty's sake unmixed with nature considers only the universal dimension of the moral agent. What is needed is the reconciliation of universal and particular aspects of the moral actions since they are essential to moral judgments; in other words, Kant's position stands in need of showing how duty is related not only to the universal good but also to the good of the moral agent.

On this controversial point, Heidegger's reinterpretation of Kant's moral theory is of great significance. His premise is that any formulation of a thematic inquiry presupposes a certain understanding of human beings and other existents. This presupposition is referred to as pre-ontological understanding of being.¹⁴⁴ Schalow's reading of Heidegger is that Kant's morality presupposes certain understanding of human nature as such. Based on this fact, he

¹⁴³ Ibid., §126.

argues that the underlying motif in Kant's ethical theory is the fact of human finitude; i.e., the limitation imposed on finite rational beings by their very nature. The human finitude is manifest in human existential mode of care; i.e., the human activity in their engagement in the world. According to Schalow, the freedom Kant refers to as autonomy of the rational will implies ability to appropriate certain values that arise from the notion of who we are as persons. Autonomy of the rational will is seen as taking responsibility and this is only possible through ethical freedom.¹⁴⁵

According to Schalow's understanding of Heidegger, feeling of respect for the law is not detached from the self. In Heidegger's terms, "feeling for is also self-feeling." I take it that at the same time that one feels respect for the law, this same feeling of respect is related to the self as the source of the moral law. Consequently, Heidegger's view that a feeling of respect is connected with 'what is the highest' in the human being i.e., the rational part of the self is valid because the respect for the law translates into self-respect.¹⁴⁶ The significance of Heidegger's phenomenological reinterpretation of Kant's concept of respect, is that the tension between self-interest and duty does not arise as it does in Kant's moral theory. For Heidegger, the concern for self is the genesis of self-respect such that respect for the moral law and respect for self are intrinsically related.¹⁴⁷ He argues that it is the feeling of respect that mitigates sensuality's obstruction of respect for the moral law. For Heidegger, the law is not primary; rather, what is primary is the subject's inner nature, which determines its reception. In this reading of Kant, the validity of the moral law depends on the moral-consciousness arising from our understanding of who we are as persons.

¹⁴⁴ Schalow, *Imagination and Existence: Heidegger's Retrieval of The Kantian Ethics*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 5.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Pg. 21.

¹⁴⁶ Schalow, *The Renewal of Heidegger-Kant Dialogue*, P. 274.

The second problem lies in Kant's position that the ultimate principle is *transcendental freedom* as opposed empirical perspective. According to Kant, the moral law has its basis *a priori* in reason. Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant is that Kant's theory is agent-centered as opposed to an approval /disapproval perspective. Korsgaard argues that this is a distinctive mark of Kant's moral theory because it is not empirically based principle but that the personal decision is the crucial part of the moral action.¹⁴⁸

I disagree with Korsgaard on this point for the following reason. Decision-making cannot preclude the empirical dimension of approval/disapproval. It seems to me Korsgaard undermines the tremendous influence that the fact of human co-existence has on our moral judgment. The fact of co-existence implies that our thought system is never solitary. This point is emphatically pointed out in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. "Being- with- others" is an *existential* mode of being of human *Da-sein*. Consequently, one's world view and this includes the moral world view, is shaped by other people's views. In Heidegger's terms, the 'they' prescribe the *attunement* of *Da-sein* and determines 'what' and 'how' one sees.¹⁴⁹ I take 'attunement', to mean *Da-sein's* disposition or the attitudes towards the self and the world. This means that the decision-making that Korsgaard emphasizes on the part of the individual presupposes what is already approved or disapproved by the community with whom one lives. In a word, our first school with regard to what is right and wrong is our culture, and we are socialized into moral values that become ingredients for our personal choices. Heidegger's claim is that "*Da-sein* is always "lost in the they" in its being-in-the-world."¹⁵⁰ What this implies is that every decision on the part of the agent carries others with it whether one is disagreeing or complying with them.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 274.

¹⁴⁸ Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, 189.

¹⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §170.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 293.

In view of Heidegger's recasting of Kant's moral theory certain issues can be raised. First the *ethical moment* is subsumed under the larger project of ontology. I argue that while the concern for being is manifest in all human activities, the 'ethical moment' stands out uniquely unlike any other mode of being. I call it a "moment" because it has a different character as a "decisive" moment; it can result to loss of life itself, a complete transformation of life on the part of individual(s) concerned, change the history of a nation or even of the world as a whole. The significance of this moment is evident in human history; for instance, Socrates moment of choice *not* to leave Athens; a moment to take unpopular stand against genocide or any degradation of human life, a decision for or against going to war, or a medical decision for self or for another etc. In Heidegger's recasting of Kantian concept of respect, or autonomy, this moment is not adequately articulated. Granted that respect for the law does not preclude respect for the self, this position does not bring to the fore the "paradoxical" nature of ethical decision in the shape it takes.

With regard to Kant's a priori grounding of the absolutely good will, Edith Whychongrod's interpretation is that Kant separates value from the phenomenal world. Levinas' contribution is significant in that he overcomes the problem of dualism in Kant's ethics by attaching the ultimate value to the phenomenal person and allowing this value to have a transcendental source.¹⁵¹ Levinas's position is that Kant is right in his demand that morality should not have empirical ground as its principle. However, since the *Other* is a phenomena in the world, we must attach the transcendental value to the phenomenal person.¹⁵² Levinas' argument resolves the problem of dualism between phenomenal and intelligible world by relating the transcendental aspect of the moral principle, the rational nature, to the empirical person. In

¹⁵¹Levinas, *Problem of Ethical Metaphysics*, 220.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 230.

this way Levinas not only succeeds in doing away with phenomena/noumena problem but can allow heteronomy in the moral law and still retain its universality which Kant tries to preserve in his position of autonomy of the moral subject.

In Kant's postulates, the problem lies in the separation between happiness and morality. For this reason, he introduces the idea of God to apportion happiness according to virtue. It seems to me that the existence of God is better arrived at in the idea of *transcendental freedom*; in Kant's terms, the unconditioned causality of causes. Therefore, happiness should be realized in the moral action itself. Concerning the immortality of the soul, there is inconsistency in Kant's position of infinite moral progress, which is at the same time unattainable. This is evident in his proposition "Virtue is always in progress and yet always begins at the beginning."¹⁵³ Kant argues that virtue is an ideal and so it is unattainable, but yet it is our duty to strive towards the goal of virtue. Further, the idea of immortality of the soul and infinite moral progress are two separate issues because the soul can be immortal without reference to infinite progress in virtue; therefore, the fact of immortality of the soul does not yield to infinite moral progress. In addition, duties to self and others through which the rational being fulfills the obligation of the moral law presuppose a corporeal nature. Consequently, the argument on "infinite moral progress" of these duties in the afterlife is superfluous.

Despite these problems, a case can be made concerning the soundness of Kant's moral theory. The significance of Kant's moral theory derives from his positive idea of human freedom and the dignity resulting from it. At the same time, Kant not only accords the human nature such a prerogative but also joins this dignity with moral responsibility.

¹⁵³ Kant, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* (1797,) trans. James Ellington, (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1964), §409.

In Schopenhauer's philosophy human being is negatively portrayed. In his view, human life is essentially emptiness and boredom. Human beings are left to their own devices and are never certain of anything except their need and misery. As such, a human being is reduced to a meaningless existence of suffering under life's demands and propagation of species.¹⁵⁴

I think Kant's view of human being has positive consequences. On the one hand the well-being in human life depends on respect or failure to respect the bare truth concerning the value of human being. Conversely, humanity fares well in the nations that have made it their goal to realize human worth. Based on this idea, Kant places the rational nature as legislator of the moral law. The significance of Kant's idea of universal legislation is that as individuals we are able to make moral demands on one another; in Korsgaard's terms, a reciprocity of moral responsibility. In the global community, Kant's universal legislation should not be underestimated. With this presupposition, the international community can reproach one another's nation for degradation of human life.

The significance of Kant's moral theory is also derivable from his idea of postulates. Despite certain inconsistencies, there is a positive element in his position in the sense that what he denied to the speculative reason he has discovered through the practical reason: the existence of God, positive concept of freedom and immortality of the soul. The significance of these concepts is that they refer to human being's ascendancy to something larger than themselves.

We see this bent even by the ancients. In Aristotle's view, wisdom is refined knowledge not merely of human matters but of *highest* objects. He argues although practical wisdom and art of politics are good for human affairs, they are not the best of knowledge there is for even certain animals have practical wisdom concerning what is good for them. Consequently, even to argue

¹⁵⁴Schopenhauer, 312.

that the practical wisdom is highest because man is the best of animals is superfluous for there are other things more divine than humans.¹⁵⁵

The point here is that through his postulates Kant brings the human being in contact with higher objects of knowledge: freedom, God, immortality of the soul, and the moral law in relation to them all. What is crucial is that the human beings not only attach ultimate value to these objects but their existence is shaped by the pursuit of these objects. Charles D. Keyes, points to the effect on human life deriving from what they value most. According to Keyes, if it happened that Platonic forms of the good, the just and the fair were illusions, the human beings who attach ultimate values to these objects would be worthy of respect.¹⁵⁶ In Keyes' terms the "valuer is valuable".¹⁵⁷ This resonates with Kant's view that the value of human beings derives from the fact that they are the *source* of value for all good things.

¹⁵⁵ Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics" 1141a 25 – 30, 1141b, 1

¹⁵⁶ Charles Don Keyes, *Brain Mystery Light and Dark: The Rhythm and Harmony of Consciousness*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 124.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Pg. 98.

CHAPTER II

FICHTE ON KANT'S MORAL THEORY

In the previous chapter the main focus was to explore the important features in Kant's moral theory for the purpose of providing the context of Hegel's ethical theory, which is the central focus of this study. Hegel's ethical theory cannot be understood apart from certain thinkers who mediate between him and Kant. In this chapter the objective is to explore Fichte's ethical theory because it influenced Hegel's reading of Kant.

Fichte's general discontent with Kant's critical philosophy is evident in his *Science of Knowledge* as laid out in his *Wissenschaftslehre* (rendered, *Doctrine of Knowledge*). According to Fichte, Kant has an adequate grasp of the problem of philosophy, namely, the possibility of 'synthetic *a priori* judgments.' He points out that Kant's response to this fundamental question revolves not on things but on the reality of reason and its representing capacity according to necessary laws, the laws that render validity to representations.

Fichte's problem with Kant is that although the latter claims that the possibility of experience has its basis in reason, he does not provide a rigorous account of the nature of reason. According to Fichte, Kant establishes only how different modes of the mind's operation work together but not that they all derive from the same principle. Fichte argues that the most serious limitation of Kant is his failure to account for the validity of representations. For Fichte, Kant's method is inductive rather than deductive.¹⁵⁸ By inductive method is meant that the validity of representations presupposes certain laws according to which the mind works: the categories. Since the laws of the mind's operation are necessary, therefore universal, the representations are valid. The argument has an if/then feature, such as is characteristic of hypothetical propositions.

The problem is that the inductive method cannot establish strong claims because it depends on if one accepts the first condition(s), in this case the laws of the mind's operation. Fichte's criticism is that these laws are not established and cannot merely be assumed. Further, it is unclear if these laws are exhausted or if there is still more to be said concerning them. A deductive account on the contrary is a genetic account that returns to the first principle so that there is no need to go beyond it. Fichte is concerned that Kant's method of establishing his claims is inadequate to ground philosophy.¹⁵⁹

The focus of this chapter is to investigate Fichte's reconstruction of Kant's practical philosophy. For this reason, the discussion addresses aspects of Fichte's Doctrine of Knowledge that facilitate clarity of his overall goal, to establish the claim of the 'primacy' of practical reason. Fichte's criticism of Kant is that the latter's claim on the primacy of practical reason is not adequately established. Consequently, moral propositions cannot attain the validity Kant seeks.

With regard to Fichte's critique of Kant, this chapter comprises three sections. Section A examines Fichte's theory of the subject, in Fichte's terms, the "I." This section analyzes two propositions that constitute the subject: (1) the I as a 'self-positing activity' in which it posits itself as 'subject-object,'; (2) the condition that the I must posit an *other*, the 'Not-I' in opposition to itself. The significance of this section is that Fichte's ethical theory hinges on the concept of the subject as a 'self-positing activity.'

Section B explores Fichte's thesis of the primacy of practical over theoretical reason. In his *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte's criticism is that although Kant claims that practical reason has prerogative he does not establish how the latter is the *basis* of theoretical reason. The objective

¹⁵⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova Methodo* (1796/99), ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeal (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 80, sec. 11.

of this analysis is to investigate the content of Fichte's proposition and to determine to what extent Fichte succeeds in resolving Kant's problem.

Section C examines Fichte's two concepts of freedom: moral and formal. Fichte asserts the value of each concept relative to their respective ends. The objective of this section is to investigate the relationship between theoretical freedom required for 'self-positing activity' of the subject, and moral freedom. Accordingly, this section focuses on three areas: (1) decipherment of the basis of the demarcation between the two realms of freedom; (2) locating the principle of morality; (3) discerning the place of the state in this scheme. The main issue concerns the relation between right and morality. Fichte argues that the idea of right is not derived from morality. Contrary to Fichte, I argue that the idea of right arises from morality and the latter extends beyond the concept of right.

This chapter concludes with a retrieval of the significant features in Fichte's reconstruction of Kant's moral theory. I will argue for the plausibility of Fichte's arguments on the one hand. On the other hand I will point out the limitations in Fichte's theory of representation and his propositions on freedom.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

A

Fichte and the Subject

Properly understood, Fichte's critique of Kant is a development of Kant's moral principles by filling the lacunae in Kant's moral theory. This way of understanding Fichte is articulated by Gunter Zoller. In the latter's view, Fichte seeks to be consistent with the spirit of the critical philosophy of Kant while at the same time rejecting what is inconsistent in it.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, Fichte reconstructs Kant's practical philosophy without destroying its overall orientation, which is to account for the possibility of the practical law of reason. Fichte maintains that his intent is to provide a deeper foundation to Kant's philosophy as a whole.¹⁶¹

From Fichte's position it can be inferred that he upholds Kant's fundamental claim concerning the 'primacy' of practical over theoretical reason. As it becomes clear in this chapter, Fichte's appropriation of Kant's principles is undeniable. His view is that both Kant and him arrive at the same conclusions but that their methods are different.¹⁶² Conclusively, it can be said that Fichte's project is Kant's project.

However, Fichte is not merely adapting a different method. His position is quite radical and parts company with Kant in important aspects. Wayne M. Martin affirms this by claiming that Fichte's problem of the primacy of practical reason extends beyond method; it is the essence of his claim in his *Doctrine of Knowledge*.¹⁶³

The point of departure for both Kant and Fichte is to answer the fundamental question regarding the 'ground' of experience. For both thinkers, the concept of ground refers to what

¹⁶⁰ Gunter Zoller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.

¹⁶¹ *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 164, §5, sec. 3.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 81, Sec. 7.

¹⁶³ Wayne M. Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena Project* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 118.

accounts for or justifies the human claim to objective reality. Fichte asserts that to claim that a given object exists beyond representation amounts to claiming that the object has an “objective reality” therefore, implying that it is not mere fantasy. Consequently, inquiry about the existence of God or mortality is to seek to know how these representations acquire objective reality beyond our representation of them.¹⁶⁴ Fichte’s basic claim is that consciousness of objects is not direct; rather, all knowledge is representational, that is, mental determinations about objects *not* objects themselves. He argues that what we are immediately conscious of is not objects but our mental states. Consequently, to claim that there are things existing beyond our representation of them is a certain leap, an ‘assumption’ that we make.¹⁶⁵

Kant’s question is: how are ‘synthetic *a priori* judgments’ possible?¹⁶⁶ According to him, the validity of experience derives from certain rules of the mind’s operations, the ‘categories.’ Kant’s response to this question is what marks the break between him and thinkers before him because unlike his predecessors who sought the ground of experience in things, Kant’s point of reference concerning the ground of experience is the subject.

Fichte’s inquiry concerning the possibility of experience is a reframing of Kant’s but far more encompassing. For Fichte, the issue concerns not simply the possibility of ‘synthetic *a priori* judgments’ but the possibility of objectivity as a whole. His question then is, how do we come to assume that any representations have reality beyond themselves?¹⁶⁷ Zoller notes the radical nature of Fichte’s inquiry; it seeks the ground of any objectivity rather than a certain type of objectivity.¹⁶⁸ Fichte’s reason for this strategy is captured in his claim that the validity of representation of the world is as fundamental as one concerning God and immortality. According

¹⁶⁴Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 79, sec. 4.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 78, sec. 3.

¹⁶⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B19.

¹⁶⁷ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 79, sec. 4.

to Fichte, if the validity of representation of the world cannot be accounted for, objective claims on the existence God, immortality or freedom cannot account for human experience of the world.¹⁶⁹ Fichte maintains that to answer this question requires a system¹⁷⁰ By system is meant a pivotal point in the structure of reason from which all experience can be grounded.¹⁷¹

Fichte's claim is that seeking the ground of experience implies acknowledging that experience is contingent. Since experience is a fact, to seek its ground is to seek that which is not part of experience; hence, the ground of experience cannot be part of experience. Fichte contends that the ground of experience is a rational ground; hence, beyond experience. Accordingly, Fichte advances the claim that the ground of experience is the 'representing subject,' which is a presupposition since the representing subject is not immediately an object of experience. What we are aware of is determinations or modes of being of consciousness of the representing subject but not the representing subject itself. In Fichte's view, representation of a representing subject is a result of the self-reverting activity of consciousness.¹⁷²

Fichte argues that there are two ways of accounting for the validity of representations: one is to suppose that representations have their ground in things themselves, a standpoint characterized as dogmatism. On the other hand, one can locate the cause of representations in the 'representing subject,' a point of view characterized as idealism.¹⁷³ Martin understands Fichte's concern to be about the 'principle' responsible for our objective judgments. Accordingly, Fichte

¹⁶⁸ Zoller, 16.

¹⁶⁹ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 79, sec. 4.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 84, sec. 9.

¹⁷² Ibid., 91, sec. 20.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

is not denying that things themselves exist independently of the representing subject; rather, he is denying that things are responsible for human experience.¹⁷⁴

As is evident from Fichte's claim, dogmatism and idealism refer to opposing accounts of the possibility of experience; the former view focuses on things, the latter on the subject. This becomes the most distinguishing feature not only of Fichte's philosophy but also of idealism. Fichte's fundamental position is "*Not-I does not impinge on the I, instead, it is the I which impinges on the Not-I in course of its expansion.*"¹⁷⁵

In experience there is a relation between the subject of experience and what is experienced. In Fichte's position, anything to be experienced cannot be between things; rather, it must be an intelligent being capable of relating the object to itself. The subject intrudes on the object or in Fichte's terms, 'impinges' on it and not vice versa. Accordingly, the *activity* of experiencing is on the subject's side. Fichte asserts that both "idealist" and "dogmatist" go beyond representations, for both assert there are objects corresponding to those representations.¹⁷⁶

Owing to the subject's vital role in accounting for the possibility of experience, Fichte's point of departure in the treatment of the problem of objectivity is the subject characterized as the 'I.' Accordingly, Fichte must show what it is about the subject that makes possible the objective experience; hence, this discussion proceeds to investigate Fichte's notion of the subject from two perspectives: the subject as 'self-positing activity' and the subject and the 'other'; in his terms the Not-I.

¹⁷⁴ Martin, 44.

¹⁷⁵ *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 183, §6, sec. 68.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 78, sec. 3.

The Subject as Self-positing Activity

In Fichte's analysis there are two propositions that make up the possibility of the I. First, the I posits itself. In Fichte's thought, the term "positing" implies the *act* of representing. Tom Rockmore interprets Fichte's idea of "positing" to mean "positioning" in opposition to something else.¹⁷⁷ This means, the I's act of self-positing is in "opposition" to itself. The problem with this principle is that it has a Cartesian tendency of immediate self-contemplation without the world. Later on in his analysis, Fichte shifts from this view and presents the subject as dependent on the world for its self-positing. It seems that he wishes to hold both positions, the I as independent and the I as dependent. However it is not clear what he wishes to accomplish with the former position and this becomes the basis of Schelling's criticism against Fichte. It seems to me that Fichte's proposition has the problem of complete abstraction of the subject such that it can think itself.

The claim in this proposition is that the I has two moments: the first moment is the positing activity; what Fichte characterizes as the real activity. The second self-positing moment is the I reflecting on its own activity of positing. In Fichte's analysis, the latter is rendered the ideal activity. Accordingly, since the I is also a subject, this act of self-positing makes it an object to itself. Consequently, in the I, the subject and object coincide so that the *I* posits itself as *subject-object*. For Fichte, the *I* is "self-positing activity" by virtue of its self-reverting activity. One "posits" oneself as *positing* and this is original consciousness. Fichte argues that the *I* must be presupposed in all consciousness prior to any other consciousness.¹⁷⁸

Frederick Neuhouser interprets Fichte as making distinction between reflection and self-positing. Neuhouser argues that the subject disappears in the object; meaning by this, that in self-

¹⁷⁷Tom Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx and the German Philosophical Tradition* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 13.

consciousness the subject does not distinguish the subject doing the positing from the object; rather, the two blend into one. Neuhouser's view is that self-positing is not explicit; instead, it is explicit only if the subject intentionally turns its regard on itself. In other words, self-positing activity is not intentional. Reflection on the other hand, is intentional awareness in any determinate thinking, which is also accompanied by self-posing activity, 'intellectual intuition.'¹⁷⁹

An equally important point is Neuhouser's insistence that self-positing is not a representation. The I is not an object to itself as external things are. According to Neuhouser, intuition directs its regard to beings. On the contrary, self-positing or intellectual intuition has its object as the activity of consciousness.¹⁸⁰ In Neuhouser's view, since self-positing takes place within the subject, it is the subject itself. Consequently, in self-positing there is no synthesis of uniting separate data into one; rather, the self-awareness referred to in this case is immediate.¹⁸¹ In other words, there is nothing mediating between the subject's thinking and the subject's awareness of the same.

The significance of Fichte's characterization of the subject as capable of self-relating activity has another implication; it resolves K. H. Reinhold's problem of representation. In Reinhold's characterization, the subject is distinguished from its act of self-awareness such that self-awareness is also a representation. Consequently, this representation requires another subject to represent the latter the result of which is infinite subjects and infinite acts of representation.¹⁸² Following Fichte, Neuhouser argues that consciousness or any mental determination whatsoever

¹⁷⁸ *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 111, §1, sec. 29.

¹⁷⁹ Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 82.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 71 – 2.

must be accompanied by self-consciousness. However, self-consciousness itself cannot be another representation. Having explicated the first principle that constitute the I, we now turn to the second proposition.

The Subject and the Other

Earlier on this analysis centered on Fichte's proposition that the I comes to be only through its self-positing activity. That is to say, the I must posit-itself as subject-object in one single action. Concerning the subject and the Other, Fichte, claims that for the I to be, the latter must posit an opposed Other, which it posits as Not-I.¹⁸³ This opposed other is the world. Following from this proposition, Fichte contends that the I can come to be only through relations with the world. It seems to me at this point Fichte holds a rather different position concerning the I's absolute and unmediated self-posing. In this principle the world is the condition of the I's self-positing activity. It follows that the I cannot be absolute since it needs the world for its self-determination.

The objective of this section is to examine the content of Fichte's principle. Fichte's claim concerning the I is that it comes to be only through an activity of *self-positing*. However, this self-positing activity is a self-determination of the I. That is to say, in self-positing the I makes a movement from indeterminate state to a determinate one. He argues that only one kind of activity can be intuited and therefore real; the freedom and its limitation.¹⁸⁴

Fichte's idea of *limitation* on the part of intellectual activity is crucial because it is what makes possible the intuition of the I. In Fichte's thought, limitation stands for an object of

¹⁸³ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 66, §2

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 163, §5, sec. 62.

activity which limits the Ego's activity and hence, determines it. According to Fichte, "pure activity" cannot be intuited apart from this limitation. Since any action is determined by the object to which it is directed, the object becomes the goal or the limitation of the Ego's free activity.¹⁸⁵ Fichte characterizes this limit as the Not-I. In Fichte's view however, the Not-I is not something real in itself but something that accounts for the I's limitation.¹⁸⁶

Fichte's thought in this position is obscure. It is not clear why he holds that the Not-I limiting the I is not actual. If the Not-I is so essential in self-determination of the I as Fichte argues, it cannot be dismissed as not real, seemingly, inessential. Fichte explains that all actuality has its source in the "original actuality"; meaning by this, the activity of the I. According to Fichte, everything originates from the relation of I and Not-I. Consequently, the Not-I is not actual unless it is posited or determined by the I as its object. Fichte argues that this proposition applies also to the I. The I comes to consciousness only by relating to the Not-I. This is because in so doing it determines itself. In Fichte's view, the I must posit itself in order to be for itself. However, this activity can only take place within the relation between the I and Not-I. Fichte concludes that the possibility of the I is only through its relation to the world. The two relations therefore are such that the I and the Not-I come to be from this relationship.¹⁸⁷ It seems in this proposition Fichte is confusing two ideas; how objects come to be 'for the subject' (in which case the subject's activity has a prerogative), and how the objects come to exist irrespective of the subject. I think the two are separate issues.

Fichte considers the relation between the I and the Not-I as the most fundamental relationship; it distinguishes the critical philosophy from philosophy before Kant. The critical

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 166, §5, sec. 63.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 163, §5, sec. 61.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 163, §5, sec. 62.

philosophy is characterized by positing a reciprocal relation between the I and the Not-I. In Fichte's view, the I is primary in that it can be thought in isolation to the Not-I but the Not-I cannot be conceived in isolation to the I.¹⁸⁸ What this means is that the I and the Not-I determine each other. In Fichte's view, Kant did not intend to account for the subject without the object, nor did he account for the objects without the unity of subject and object, the central question in critical philosophy. In Fichte's thought, objects are arrived at as a result of the nature of consciousness; hence, the starting point is the unity of the I and Not-I.

F.W.J. Schelling's reading of Fichte is that the I referred to in Fichte's doctrine of consciousness is the human I; the I that each finite rational being is.¹⁸⁹ However, Schelling raises a number of issues against Fichte's characterization of the subject.

First, he points out that nature in Fichte's Doctrine of Knowledge is not explained in its differentiation but only in terms of a *limit* to the *I*, as an abstract *other*. In Schelling's view, there is more differentiation of objects in Kant's philosophy than in Fichte's Doctrine of Science.¹⁹⁰

Second, Schelling argues that Fichte extends the autonomy that Kant attributes only to moral agency to the theoretical sphere of the I. Schelling is referring to Fichte's position that it is only through the I's 'self-reverting activity' that objectivity comes to be. Schelling contends that Fichte's proposition is erroneous; it accords too much independence to the human I from external reality.¹⁹¹

Finally, Schelling, argues that the I cannot possibly posit objects outside itself freely and at will. If this were the case, the human subject would posit things differently since there are

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 164 –5, §5, sec. 62.

¹⁸⁹ F.W.J. Von Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 106.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 107.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 108.

certain realities it would rather have posited. Consequently, the I must depend on its nature for its objective positing rather than at will.¹⁹²

Concerning Schelling's argument on Fichte's characterization of objectivity as merely 'other' without differentiation, I think Schelling's point is valid. The human subject does not merely posit other, but things in their differences and relationships to one another; this is necessary for self-determination. This is because the human subject does not determine itself through a concept of 'indeterminate' other but through some particular objects and only through them does the subject realize its goals.

With regard to Schelling's argument pertaining Fichte's position that "everything comes to be through the I and for the I," the important issue concerns how Fichte's proposition ought to be understood. On the one hand, Fichte can be understood as claiming that the I is the efficient cause of the objective world. On the other hand, Fichte's proposition can be understood to mean that if objective reality is to exist for the subject, the latter must be both capable of representing the objects and be conscious of its activity. It seems to me that Schelling's reading of Fichte is according to the former but I think this interpretation is mistaken. My understanding of Fichte is that he means to advance the latter claim as is evident in his text: "...the representing subject is whatever it is only by means of self-activity. This proposition should not be taken to suggest any creation of representations...."¹⁹³ I take this to mean that the representations as determinations of the I are not the subject's production out of nothing; rather, they originate from the objective world, the experience of which is possible on the basis of the subject's activity. For Fichte, experience is an activity and this is only in reference to an intelligent being. Based on Fichte's position stated above, it does not seem to be his claim that the I "creates" the world; rather, his

¹⁹² Ibid.

claim is that if the I is to experience the world, it must be capable of relating the objective reality to itself. On the whole, Fichte's fundamental point is that there is something in the nature of the subject that makes it possible to experience the world and this is its self-positing activity.

This way of understanding Fichte is supported in Martin's analysis of Fichte's distinction between dogmatism and idealism as indicated above. According to Martin, Fichte's claim is not that things can exist only for consciousness, for things can and do exist independently from a representing subject. Fichte's problem according to Martin is with regard to the condition of experience, that is, if there is such a thing as experience or representation of objective reality, there has to be a "representing mind" for things are not capable of representing.¹⁹⁴

However, despite Fichte's statement above, there is a tinge of confusion in proposition concerning the I and the other. In some instances, it is unclear whether he means the Not-I cannot exist 'for' the I unless the I can represent it or the Not-I cannot exist independently of being posited by the I.

Regarding the autonomy of the I, Schelling argues against Fichte that the I must owe its free activity *not* to itself but to its nature.¹⁹⁵ I take this to mean that the Ego is determined to be free in its nature; therefore, its free activity is not at will. The problem in Schelling's argument is that it introduces another principle characterized as nature as the ground of freedom of the I. This is problematic because if freedom of the I depends on something else, then it is *not* freedom. In Schelling's argument we lose the freedom of the I that is ultimately needed to ground morality. It seems one cannot grant Schelling's argument and still uphold the freedom of moral subject if what is ultimate is nature. In Fichte's doctrine of consciousness, freedom and nature are

¹⁹³ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, . 96, sec. 18.

¹⁹⁴ Martin, 47.

¹⁹⁵ Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 108.

united.¹⁹⁶ His major claim, which is the centerpiece of his entire thought, is that the transition from ‘indetermination’ to ‘determination’ has its basis in the I itself. He characterizes the activity of representing as the real activity while the act of reflecting on the real activity is ideal activity. He argues that the movement from indeterminacy to determinacy is freedom and is the ground of all other species of consciousness. The question of freedom is central in Fichte’s thought and it will be addressed in Section C of this chapter.

The crux of Fichte’s theory of the subject is showing that the latter has prerogative in the possibility of experience. Concerning the theory of representation, Fichte argues that human beings are conscious of representing something. In addition, there are objects corresponding to these representations, independently of representation of them. According to Fichte, the connection between representation and things is also a representation but things outside the mind really exist. He contends that the representation connecting representation with objects is a necessary representation.

According to Fichte, representations are of two kinds: those arising from *free* acts of imagination and those “accompanied by a feeling of necessity.”¹⁹⁷ I understand this to mean that the former representations need not have reality beyond these representations as they could be a mere fantasy, which our imagination is capable of representing at will. With regard to the latter, our representation of a world with objects is not a result of choice but arises from necessity of rational beings. These representations are necessary in that one cannot not think the world. As will be shown later the rational being not only has to represent the world but must also order its actions according to its concept of the world.

¹⁹⁶Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 99, sec. 20.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 88, sec. 18.

B

The Primacy of Practical Reason

Fichte's claim of the 'primacy' of practical reason is based on his notion that the 'self-positing activity' of the subject is possible only on the condition that the subject possesses a practical power. In Fichte's thought, to have practical power is to have the capacity to make a transition from one state to another. In his terms, to "possesses the possibility to become something else..." For Fichte, this is the meaning of absolute freedom.¹⁹⁸ He contends that the possibility of theoretical reason, which is a capacity for self-determination through self-positing activity, depends on *practical power*.¹⁹⁹

To be sure, Kant refers to the primacy of practical reason both in his second and third *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. According to Martin, Fichte's view of the priority of practical reason is not a matter of adapting a different method but is rooted in his Doctrine of Knowledge concerning the ground of experience.²⁰⁰ In his *Critique of Judgment* Kant argues that we are commanded to further the *highest good*.²⁰¹ In Kant's moral philosophy, only *free* beings can be commanded; hence, as many of Kant's interpreters have pointed out, "ought means can," that is, only if one is not *predetermined* can one be commanded. In his second *Critique*, Kant asserts that in its theoretical use, reason seeks the unconditioned condition. In its practical use, reason discovers this principle that the theoretical use cannot discover but needs for its very operation.²⁰² What Kant is referring to in this statement is that theoretical use of reason is not able to deduce the fact of freedom for everything operates

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 140, §3, sec. 47.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 163, §5, sec. 61.

²⁰⁰ Martin, 118.

²⁰¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 362.

according to necessary laws of nature. However, this freedom is discovered in practical use of reason through the moral law, which is a command of reason. It follows that the human subject is free for only free beings can be commanded. However, freedom is necessary for the theoretical reason to form concepts needed for self-determination. In Martin's understanding, the primacy of practical reason does not imply subordination of metaphysics under the practical philosophy; rather, the argument is that theoretical judgments on the existence of God or immortality presuppose a practical judgment, "the command to further the highest good."²⁰³ Fichte's criticism is that Kant has only mentioned this fact without showing how practical reason has priority such that it is the basis of theoretical reason.²⁰⁴

In the preceding discussion, Fichte's argument concerning the activity of consciousness has centered on showing how the subject comes to be, the subject must posit itself. This 'self-positing' implies a movement from indeterminate to determinate state of consciousness. According to the second proposition, the subject must posit an other, the Not-I in opposition to itself. Fichte maintains that what has been established is that the *I* carries on this activity. However, this alone is insufficient because it does not say whether the subject 'must' do so. In other words, for an account of the activity of the subject to be complete, the *necessity* of its activity must be established.²⁰⁵

Fichte's answer to this question is that the reason or the ground for this act cannot be sought. For Fichte, there is no ground for the foundation. In Fichte's view this is the end of all reason because there is *nothing* that mediates between the subject's *self-positing* activity and

²⁰² Idem. *Critique of Practical Reason*, Bk. II, Ch. II, §121.

²⁰³ Martin, 121.

²⁰⁴ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 163, §5, sec. 61.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., P. 138, §2, sec 46.

itself. In other words, the subject is its activity and reflects on its very self. According to Fichte, the subject is the sole ground of its own action.²⁰⁶

What is significant in Fichte's claim is that necessity and freedom are reconciled. This is because the I is essentially indeterminate, that is its nature. However, since indeterminacy on the part of the I implies freedom to determine itself, its nature dissolves.

This is where Fichte and Schelling part company. In Schelling's view, the I is what it is, a 'self-positing activity' by nature and does not do so at will. The problem with Schelling's position is that nature needs to be explained. On the other hand, granted that the rational being is what it is by nature, it is not clear to what extent nature plays a role in self-determination for to be rational is to have the capacity of self-determination as opposed to being extrinsically determined.

Fichte's thought can be understood in his distinction between 'real' and 'ideal' activity of the I. Accordingly, both activities refer to the I's 'agility' in its movement of self-determination; therefore, the movement in question in both real and ideal activities, is from indeterminacy to determinacy. With regard to 'real' and 'ideal' activity, however, there is a difference. In Fichte's analysis, ideal activity is an activity in an inactive state for it determines itself through reflecting on the representing activity which must take place for self-posing to occur.²⁰⁷

Real activity on the other hand, is the actual activity of representing; hence its actual activity consists in agility of movement to activity. As such, real activity determines itself through its activity of representation. Fichte's claim is that the ground of this activity is completely in the subject itself. This proposition is of utmost importance in Fichte's account

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 139, §3, sec. 47.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 142, §3, sec. 49.

because it is only in this sense that the I can be said to be indeterminate and so determines itself. In Fichte's understanding, the reason for the I's self-determination in any given manner lies within it; in other words, the I's 'transition' from one state to another is possible because it is free.²⁰⁸ I understand Fichte's claim to imply that the basis or the why of the I's 'self-determination' is rooted in itself as opposed to an external principle.

In Fichte's account, the same agility refers to ideal activity. However, the self-determination in the ideal activity is characterized as 'mirroring' the real activity. That is to say, it reflects the real activity. This is an important feature of this argument in that it shows the relation between theoretical and practical reason. The theoretical reason 'mirrors' the real activity, that of representation. Unlike the mirror, which does not see, the I sees itself since the determinate activity observed, freedom is itself. Fichte's thought on the subject's act of *imaging* is characterized as '*seeing of seeing*.'²⁰⁹ That is, the subject sees the activity of representing which is also a kind of seeing. However, what is copied is not an image but something real, the I itself in its true being, that is, its freedom. The significance of this argument is that self-determination on the part of the I is not optional but a law such that 'imaging' becomes an ethical ought of the I.²¹⁰ Since ideal activity only copies the real activity, its activity depends on the object rather than on itself. In Fichte's terms, "the ideal activity has its foundation on the real activity that lies before it."²¹¹ The real activity then is a productive activity since it is the source of representations intuited by the ideal activity.

Fichte's claim here is meant to distinguish the theoretical activity of self-positing of the I from the practical activity of self-determination through concepts. Fichte's claim in this

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 141, §3, sec. 48.

²⁰⁹ William S. Wurzer, "Fichte's Parergonal Visibility" in, *Fichte: Historical /Contemporary Controversies*, 211.

distinction is that the self-positing activity has as its ground the actual activity. The reason for this can be stated as follows: the I's positing must have an object; its immediate object is the freedom of the I. However, freedom as such, unless determinate, cannot be an object of intuition. As a result, the determinate freedom is what becomes the object of the I's intuiting activity. Without this object (freedom) the I cannot posit itself, for then there would be no object of intuition. Accordingly, the I's real activity must take place for the self-positing activity to take place. Conversely, for the I to reflect on its own activity it must possess the practical power. This is explicit in Fichte's claim: "It is in the course of acting that the I first encounters objects...If there is no practical activity, and if there is no acting, there is no representing."²¹²

In this text, Fichte establishes that theoretical activity must be practical to be possible. This is because in both positing and self-positing, the I is engaged in activity. Based on this position, Fichte's argument is that human beings cannot be representing beings without engaging in activity.²¹³

In view of what has been discussed so far, it can be inferred that by advancing his claim concerning the primacy of practical reason, Fichte also establishes the idea of the unity of practical and theoretical reason, which for Kant, remained separate. This endeavor on Fichte's part is evidenced in his text: "There is only one action considered from different viewpoints. One is what is conceptually grasped the other is what is intuited. None can exist without the other for it is nothing."²¹⁴ The latter proposition is pivotal in Fichte's project for establishing the relation between practical and theoretical reason. For Fichte, practical power is understood as the capacity for self-determination. But since ideal activity must be practical the two are one and the

²¹⁰ Ibid., 216.

²¹¹ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 148, §3, sec. 48.

²¹² Ibid., 163, §5, sec. 61.

same reason, viewed in their different moments. Regarding the issue of primacy of practical reason, Fichte argues:

It is correct.... that philosophy must begin with a *postulate*, but one that is grounded in an *act* and *not* a *fact*. An *act* is what occurs when I let my I act within itself and observe what happens. A “fact” in contrast, is present within consciousness as something already given or discovered, which can only be analyzed subsequently.²¹⁵

Fichte’s position in this text is crucial; it captures the core of his thought. For Fichte, activity is the first principle. Since the theoretical judgments are acts of consciousness, activity is condition for all such judgments and this is what Fichte implies by the primacy of practical reason. According to Fichte “act” means acting “internally and observing what one is doing.”²¹⁶ This means, positing and being aware of one’s activity of positing. The postulate referred to in the text is the first act of positing, which Fichte establishes that cannot be proven and need not be but must be assumed. Ultimately, Fichte’s claim is that one cannot be “self-aware” as acting unless one is actually in activity. However, ‘self-reverting’ activity, is only possible if the first activity occurs; hence, theoretical reason depends on practical reason. Accordingly, both the first act of representing and the one that reflects on it require absolute freedom.

We can now cross-examine Fichte’s analysis of primacy of practical reason. It can be argued that the strength of Fichte’s account lies in his thoroughgoing deduction concerning the primacy of practical reason. This has developed and grounded Kant’s claim that reason is practical. Not only does Fichte establish the claim that practical reason is primary but his project also establishes the validity of this claim by establishing how theoretical reason is necessarily practical and in the latter lies its possibility.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 143, §3, sec. 49.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 110, §1, sec. 27.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

On the other hand, there are claims in Fichte's analysis that are controversial, for example, "...all that exists is through absolute freedom and without freedom there is nothing." In this statement, it is not clear whether Fichte means the freedom of 'finite rational beings' or the freedom of the divine as Kant has it in his antinomy of pure reason.²¹⁷ I think the two senses of freedom are not interchangeable. This is because there are certain characteristics of freedom such as, freedom as efficient causality that are not applicable to the finite rational agent. This difference is articulated by Allison in the distinction between the divine causality and causality through free agency such as finite rational being. According to Allison, the divine causality is prior both in time and in causality while the free agency is beginning only in causality.²¹⁸

Further, Fichte's position, "Nothing exists except what is within the consciousness" is controversial. This is because it is *not* the case that all that exists is within consciousness. While some reality is within the reach of human experience some reality is inaccessible by finite consciousness. Fichte's position limits everything to consciousness but reality is more complex than he seems to acknowledge. Robert R. Williams points to the problem of representation by advancing the argument that Fichte's theory of representation is limited when it comes to representation of a rational being, for the latter cannot be reduced to a mere representation.²¹⁹

Williams' criticism is valid because the human subject is unlike other objects in that it determines itself. Consequently, any representation of rational being would be inaccurate owing to the transcendent aspect of the human subject. Emmanuel Levinas points to this reality in his

²¹⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A445/B473.

²¹⁸ Allison, 26.

²¹⁹ Robert Williams, "The Question of the Other in Fichte's Thought" in, *Fichte: Historical Context/Contemporary Controversies*, eds. Daniel Breazeal and Tom Rockmore (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1994), 148.

view that the ‘Other’ always overflows our representation of him.²²⁰ I understand Levinas’ claim to indicate that the Other cannot be contained in a representation in virtue of its transcendental aspect.

C

Moral and Formal Freedom

In preceding sections, freedom of consciousness, is deduced from the subject’s self-posing activity as the ground of experience. In the last section, the focus was to examine Fichte’s claim concerning the primacy of practical reason. The significance of this section was Fichte’s genetic deduction of how practical reason is the ground of theoretical reason and therefore, the principle responsible for the possibility of experience. Fichte’s reconstruction of Kant’s practical philosophy aims at providing it a firmer foundation. In this section, the aim is to investigate the relation between theoretical freedom manifest as self-posing activity of the subject and morality.

Fichte distinguishes two kinds of freedom: freedom of choice and transcendental freedom, autonomy. He argues that transcendental freedom operates in accordance with the practical law of reason. In the latter sense of freedom no choice is involved as the law of reason is necessary. In this the meaning of freedom is negative for it refers to freedom from compulsion. In Fichte’s view, if the transcendental freedom cannot be defended, freedom of choice cannot. Freedom of choice on the other hand is one’s capacity to determine oneself whatever way.²²¹ This distinction is important because, empirically considered it is impossible to know if one is free or determined by objects of one’s choice. However, the only way to defend empirical freedom is to establish its basis, that is, transcendental freedom for this is freedom from natural

²²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University, 1969), 195 – 6.

necessitation. The moral law is based on the idea of transcendental freedom for it is only in this that the human will can be understood to be autonomous.

Freedom according to Fichte is the essence of consciousness, therefore, it is not inferred from any other principle. For Fichte, “freedom appears to us as a fact of consciousness.” Fichte argues that there is nothing behind this ‘appearance’ and that it is real freedom. He contends that practical reason is the only reason for not seeking anything beyond the appearance of freedom.²²²

Fichte’s argument is central to his grounding of Kant’s moral principle. In Kant’s account, there is the dualism of ‘phenomena’ and ‘noumena’ in accounting for freedom with the result that freedom is this in itself and cannot be known.²²³ For Fichte however, there is no true being beyond the appearance of freedom. Accordingly, if it appears to us that we are free we are actually free.

Neuhouser’s understanding of Fichte is that self-positing activity is at the basis of all self-determination. Consequently, since morality has to do with self-determination through freedom, self-positing of the I can be transported to the moral sphere of the subject.²²⁴ Concerning the notion of self-positing, Neuhouser makes an important remark. He argues that self-positing is the subject, it is not a power; it is an activity of self-awareness. The implication here is that self-positing is ‘self-awareness.’ The subject sees itself as it actually is. For Fichte, the most immediate object of self-positing activity is freedom. In Neuhouser’s interpretation of Fichte,

²²¹ Fichte, *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* (1762 – 1814), trans. Garrett Green (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1978), §2, sec. 31.

²²² Fichte, *The Science of Ethics as Based on the Science of Knowledge*, trans. A.E. Kroeger, ed. W.T. Harris (London, Great Britain: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 58.

²²³ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Bk. 1, sec. 26, §6.

²²⁴ Neuhouser, *Fichte’s Theory of Subjectivity*, 120.

freedom of the subject is not a phenomenon as opposed to noumenon; instead, the subject is immediately aware of its freedom as it actually is in its very activity.²²⁵

According to Fichte, there are two ways in which the subject manifests itself: thinking and willing. The former refers to reflection while the latter refers to actual activity of relating objects to subject. According to Fichte, willing is thinking in representing activity.²²⁶ I understand this to mean that thought and action are united in one important respect, both are activities of reason. The only difference is that the thinking or reflection is directed to the activity of consciousness, while the *willing* activity is directed to the objects

The question is how the idea of freedom required for self-positing is related to morality. Zoller's understanding of Fichte is that the I that is to have an effect on morality has the same character as the I that does self-positing, the agility and positing of Not-I. Agility is a characteristic that defines its being. On the other hand, there is the character of the I as intelligence through which it reflects on itself and relates all beings to itself. Viewed from this perspective, the I both acts, and intuitively its activity. Willing, that is, making determinate choices, is the feature that marks who human beings actually are.²²⁷

This brings us to Fichte's notion of "finding ourselves." To "find" oneself means to be aware of oneself as willing and to find oneself willing presupposes an activity of so doing; in other words, to be conscious of oneself is to be aware of one's activity. However, the subject cannot be aware of its activity unless it is actually in activity. Fichte's concept of finding oneself is that consciousness is "consciousness of one's consciousness," a notion that sounds repetitious but which conveys his idea of original objectivity. Originally, it is simply consciousness that is

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Fichte, *Science of Ethics*, 24.

²²⁷ Zoller, 60.

not an object of reflection for it only becomes the object of reflection when it is modified into consciousness of something. Fichte's point is that consciousness is prior to particular determination. It is this consciousness that manifests itself in thinking and willing.

In Fichte's account, to think of oneself in a determinate way is to have a concept of self. Fichte argues that since one arrives at a concept of something only as it appears in the mind, an objection could be raised that even the concept of oneself as free is conditioned by the way the mind is so that the self in itself might as well be different from the concept of it. Accordingly, the only way to know the ontology of the self is to obtain this knowledge by means other than thinking. In Fichte's view, the concern of this objection is not that this is the way the subject thinks of itself but to go from thought to something objective.²²⁸ What is implied in this argument is that in the mind's way of thinking, the subject has the concept of itself as free. However, this could as well be an illusion but that there may not be freedom at all; therefore, the only way to know if the subject is indeed free is through some other means. Fichte however does not wish to go in this direction because the only route to knowledge is through the intellect. Consequently, if this is not capable of attaining to objective truth of itself, there would be no truth about the self from any other source.

Fichte's dealing with this problem is that there is no movement from thought to objectivity though to do so is possible. To move from thought to existence outside of thought is a necessity such that being must be thought. This is necessitated by the fact of consciousness, which is always "consciousness of something" and so a necessary activity of the Ego. Fichte argues that to move from thought to object is already in us and were it not the essence of the Ego

²²⁸ Fichte, *Science of Ethics*, 20.

to do so, this transition would not be possible. Consequently, the human subject does not say that it appears to be free but that it is free.²²⁹

Fichte's argument here is crucial for it points to the fact that he already insists on in his *Wissenschaftslehre*. Here he distinguishes things that are products of mind's freedom from objects that are "accompanied by a feeling of necessity."²³⁰ The moral significance of this is that there is a demand made on the subject to posit objectivity. In Martin's interpretation of Fichte, this is the first evidence of constraint, we are constrained to think objectivity.²³¹ Fichte's argument translates to 'thinking of ourselves as free is a demand made upon us'

Fichte's claim is that the main characteristic by which the Ego differentiates itself from anything unlike itself is the "tendency to activity." For this reason, when we abstract the Ego from its objects, this is what is thought.²³² Accordingly, the essence of intelligence is absolute activity. To posit the Ego as absolute activity is the same as positing absolute freedom as the essence of the Ego. For Fichte, freedom and intelligence are one and the same thing. In Fichte's thought however, being absolute implies two things: first, its self-determination is grounded entirely in itself and second, that it exists prior to its being determined or posited. I understand Fichte's position to imply that intelligence as such is indeterminate; therefore, it must exist as such for it to determine itself.

Fichte distinguishes self-determination from being determined. He argues that natural things are determined by their own nature. In Fichte's thought things do not determine themselves; rather, their determination is a natural necessity. On the contrary, to determine oneself is to do so from an act of freedom. Fichte maintains that freedom must not be understood

²²⁹ Ibid., 21

²³⁰ Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova Methodo*, 96, sec. 18.

²³¹ Martin, 39.

as groundless being; rather, freedom is a ground that is not a being in turn.²³³ I understand in this Fichte to rule out any possibility that freedom as a determinate being. As he argues in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, that which is the ground of experience cannot be itself an object of experience, instead it can only be arrived at through thinking. Fichte contends that thinking is such a principle, it is essentially an activity not a being. So understood, it is an activity of self-determination.

An important point that Fichte makes with regard to freedom is that to be free, something must be able to determine itself as opposed to being determined. It follows that only intelligent beings can be free to determine themselves, free in the above sense and its freedom arises from self-positing activity. Owing to this freedom, the intelligent being can subsume its being under a given concept.²³⁴

Fichte's major premise is that what the Ego can be in 'actuality' depends on a concept. The Ego determines itself through a concept at any given moment. Consequently, even what the Ego will be in the future must first be determined by itself through a concept. What is peculiar about this self-determination is that it is a necessary determination; that is, the ego must form a concept. However, not only does it have to form a concept, it must act in accordance with this concept. In other words, the Ego is constrained to act according to this concept.

Wurzer points to this in his discussion of laws of imagination. Imaging is not arbitrary but according to a law. The law of imagination arises from the relation of the I and being.²³⁵ I understand 'being' here as the idea of what ought to be through freedom. Self-determination is then a moral command to be what one ought to be; the image must strive to be. In imaging,

²³² Fichte, *Science of Ethics*, 34.

²³³ Ibid., 40.

²³⁴ Ibid., 41.

reason emancipates/tears itself from itself. The significance of this is that in so doing, the subject realizes its own freedom by forming its own concept, the image. In Wurzer's analysis, to see what ought to be is to be obligated. Image ought to mirror its being and this is the meaning of the "moral ought" because the *I* is not free not to be what it ought to be.²³⁶

Fichte like Kant, posits the relation between freedom and law. In Kant's theory of ethics, the relation is "reciprocal" such that the idea of moral law arises from freedom and the vice versa.²³⁷ In Fichte's account however, freedom and law are not two different things as they are in Kant's account of freedom and moral law. In Fichte's view, freedom does not follow from law nor law from freedom; the two are not separate concepts but both are one and the same thing. For Fichte, freedom is lawless in as much as this means determination from external principle but it is under its own law so far as it determines itself.²³⁸ Freedom is determinable in countless possible ways but under a fixed conception of a rule by which the rational being determines itself to act under a given maxim, moral or otherwise.²³⁹

Morality comprises in the necessity of acting according to a conception; this means that some actions accord with what should be while others are contrary to what *ought* to be, and therefore should be avoided. Acting on this law is an unconditional conception and has no external basis but is solely in the subject. According to Fichte, the choice to act according to a concept has its justification in itself. That is to say, a choice to engage or to refrain from certain

²³⁵ Wurzer, 214.

²³⁶ Ibid., P. 216.

²³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Bk. I, Ch. I, §6.

²³⁸ Fichte, *Science of Ethics*, 59.

²³⁹ Ibid., 59.

acts has no other sanction save that they ought or ought not to be chosen. Further, what ought to be is what is to be made actual without exception; in other words, it is a command.²⁴⁰

In Fichte's view of necessity of acting according to the concept of a rule and not just arbitrary rule, arises the universality of the moral command. The necessity of acting according to a law means that although the rational being is free, freedom is limited as it must be determined by the law.

On the basis of the conception of a rule and acting in accordance with it arises the autonomy or self-legislation of rational beings. It means that the Ego gives a law according to which it *ought* to order its actions and this law is discovered by free judgment. Accordingly, morality in rational beings exists because these beings are capable of self-legislation, a law to themselves and so capable of self-determination in higher spheres than in accordance with individual interests. So far as the law is concerned, it requires complete independence from determination by anything besides reason.²⁴¹ In this analysis the rational being is both free and determined. It is determined in the sense that its freedom is freedom under the law of self-determination. However, since this self-determination is through its own freedom, self-determination and freedom are one and the same.²⁴²

Concerning the self-determination of the subject, Fichte argues that reason is practical in so far as it is the means of realizing its external ends that pertain to our human nature. In this however, reason is only technically practical; its practicality is pertinent to what is necessary to achieve what one needs for one's well-being. According to Fichte however, reason is the ground of the ends it conceives so long as it is absolutely practical; that is to, it is only its own ground if

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 60.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 61.

²⁴² Ibid., 64-5.

these ends are only possible through freedom. In Fichte's view, the 'dignity' of practical reason lies in its capacity of self-determination outside of external influence.²⁴³ The implication of this claim is that reason determines its own action as it reflects on itself.

The significance of the Ego's self-reflection is that morality concerns actions that arise from the self-awareness of one's freedom. What is crucial concerning the moral acts is that they are thought to be free and therefore, as they ought to be. Fichte acknowledges that the universality of morality is not immediately inferable from consciousness of it. Consequently, if one denies freedom it cannot be proven. However, he insists that although consciousness of freedom is clouded with desires, the subject nevertheless, judges the actions of others as free. This is an indication that even though one can deny the moral principle in judging one's actions one cannot avoid using it in judging other people's actions. The implication about judgment is that the subject, whose actions are under judgment, has within itself the capacity to act differently.²⁴⁴

In his *Review of Aenesidemus* Fichte is wrestling with a question of deriving 'ability' from 'obligation.' According to Aenesidemus, Kant is justified in deriving capacity to fulfill the moral command from the fact that it is commanded.²⁴⁵ I take this to refer to Kant's proposition that a moral command means one can fulfill the moral ought. Aenesidemus objection is based on the premise that one cannot know what is commanded before judging what one is capable of. Therefore, commands must be based on theoretical knowledge of one's capacity to fulfill them;

²⁴³ Ibid. 63.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 66.

²⁴⁵ Fichte, "Review of Aenesidemus," in, *Between Kant and Hegel*, trans. George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 151, sec. 21.

that means one has to rely on experience. The conclusion is that what Kant deduces from command must be deduced before the command.²⁴⁶

Fichte argues that Aenesidmus objection is based on his failure to distinguish between theoretical judgments from practical judgments. According to Fichte, Aenesidemus fails to understand what is at issue in moral commands; they do not refer to what is possible in the sensible world (in which case this is under the theoretical judgment); instead, the moral commands are addressed not to the physical capacity but to the volition. Therefore, the moral commands are not about doing or avoiding something but striving and this striving is sufficient even if one achieves nothing in the sensible world.²⁴⁷

The problem with Aenesidemus criticism is that it leaves unexplained who determines what the subject is capable of and the standard to be used to determine the capacity for moral responsibility. Consequently, what one is capable of is contingent on individual judgment. The result is one cannot be held responsible for not fulfilling what in one's judgment one is not capable of. As a result, there can be no laws since laws are indifferent to such judgments.

Fichte contends that conception has a reality and its applicability implies that there is a world and consciousness about this world. Everything is what it is because that is the way we conceive it. Fichte argues that our conception of a *cause* results in our relating cause to its effect the world. Similarly, the concept of a law has influence in the way one sees the world. In the realm of freedom, which is not only subjective, one takes oneself as limited so that other subjects can exercise the same freedom. Fichte contends that the point of contact with other human beings is the reciprocal limitation of human freedom. From the concept of law there arises a community

²⁴⁶Ibid.

²⁴⁷Ibid., 151, sec. 22.

of free beings.²⁴⁸ Consequently, morality is a determinate way of understating freedom. Consciousness of freedom is determined by the concept of a goal. In morality, this determination does not have a material object but only what ought to be. A moral goal is a concept not of a real object but of what ought to be through freedom.²⁴⁹

So understood, morality is an idea but nothing corresponds to it in the real world. Hence the question concerns the content of morality. Fichte argues that the content is the concept of what we ought to be. To ought to do something means to produce an effect in the world in which moral subjects find themselves. But since morality is not about what *is*, its idea is a constant approximation of the end since morality is always what ought to be.²⁵⁰ In this, Fichte follows Kant in the idea of striving. However, as noted earlier, the notion of striving is problematic and is one of the issues towards which Hegel's criticism against Kant is directed. Accordingly, since freedom must be determined it must have an object of its activity. It follows that we must connect the moral principle with the sensuous world. The issue concerns how to arrive at what ought to be done in particular situations and what the sphere of our action is.

Fichte argues that since the world is theoretically determined through freedom as a principle, the world constitutes the objects of moral duties. Therefore, the practical law directed to our consciousness is a continuation of the practical law, which is the theoretical principle. The law of freedom has general determination and it is the same law of freedom, which is practically conceivable.²⁵¹

The content of freedom, which is under the law, has practical applicability; hence, its general expression is to act according to the original determinations of sensible objects.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 65.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 68.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 69.

Theoretically, the concept of my *own* freedom implies that all human beings are free. Practically understood, this proposition results in a command to treat each rational being as a free being. Further, if in theory I conceive my body as instrumental to all my free activity in the world, then in practice I ought to treat my body as an expression of my freedom.²⁵² Having examined Fichte's idea of the moral freedom, the investigation proceeds to analyze his concept of formal freedom.

In *Science of Ethics* Fichte argues that concepts have reality; for example, the concept of cause results in the ability to connect cause and effect. Similarly, the concept of a rational being connects to legal rights. The difference is one cannot will to eliminate an effect from its cause for this is beyond human power. On the contrary, a rational being can will to deprive others of their legal rights. The concept that every event has a cause necessitates one to acknowledge and to act accordingly. However, the concept that all people have legal rights does not necessitate an individual to act according to that concept.²⁵³ I understand Fichte's argument to mean that the concept that rational beings are free does not necessarily translate into reality of how they are actually treated. To treating the other according to this concept, the rational will has to make that choice and can choose otherwise. Because it is important that the rational will makes the choice to treat the other as one ought to, the question of how this can be ensured becomes Fichte's project in the *Foundation of Natural Right*.

Neuhouser argues that Fichte's aim is to ground the theory of right as a science independent of morality. Although Fichte at one point espoused the notion that right is derived from morality, *Foundation of Natural Right* is a complete shift from this earlier view. According

²⁵¹ Ibid., 72.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 68.

to Neuhouser, Fichte's concept of right is rooted in his notion of a person as explicated in Fichte's major work, *Wissenschaftslehre*. In "Doctrine of Science," the Ego is possible only if it posits itself. However, self-positing activity is an act of freedom. Accordingly, Fichte's 'theory of right' hinges on the person's freedom. Properly understood, this freedom is formal, for it refers to the subject's self-determination irrespective of kind. Freedom of choice is opposed to external coercion and is distinct from autonomy of moral agency, which pertains to self-legislation according to universal principles of practical law.²⁵⁴

Neuhouser's reading of Fichte is that the idea of a person carries with it awareness of oneself as an individual, a free agent. Emphasis is on the the ultimate ground of one's actions as based on the self's capacity to form concepts and to act on them. On this basis the subject ascribes the freedom of decision-making and actions based on this decision to oneself. This is different from being caused to act by something external. Neuhouser argues that it is the act of freely choosing a particular action among other possibilities that is the distinguishing mark of an individual. So construed, formal freedom is not only the basis of a person's awareness of individuality but also distinguishes the person from others in important respects.²⁵⁵

In Fichte's theory of right, the rational being cannot posit itself as free in the sense indicated above without ascribing the same freedom to other finite rational beings. T.P. Hohler understands Fichte to imply that a rational being requires another rational being for realization of one's freedom.²⁵⁶ Following Fichte's premise, Hohler argues that a rational being only realizes freedom by acting freely. However, acting freely on the part of the rational being is conditioned

²⁵⁴ Neuhouser, "Fichte and the Relationship Between Right and Morality" in *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, 166.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ T.P. Hohler, *Imagination and Reflection: Intersubjectivity; Fichte's Grundlage of 1794* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 61.

by a provocation to act.²⁵⁷ Fichte characterizes the challenge to act freely as a 'summons' which is necessarily external to the subject. The unique character of a summons is that the subject is 'determined to self-determination.'²⁵⁸ This means that the subject must act and is thereby limited, but at the same time free through a free act. In other words, a summons, or in Hohler's terms 'provocation,' must leave the freedom of the subject intact as it is necessary for self-determination. Accordingly, the relation between the subject and the other is a relation of right. In Hohler's view, the idea of right arises from the notion of an individual and there can be no individual, apart from the context of plurality. Individuality implies that the rational being is necessarily one among others.²⁵⁹

Williams' interpretation is that a summons is an invitation to the subject to exercise free causality. According to Williams, a summons is an encounter with the other such that it obligates the freedom of the subject.²⁶⁰ The idea of a summons is central to Fichte's thought because it is in response to this summons that the subject realizes freedom, for to acknowledge an obligation is to acknowledge one's freedom to act according to the obligation.

Fichte maintains that a rational being cannot act except in response to a summons. However, a summons can come only from a rational being outside the subject because only a rational being can understand freedom. Consequently, a rational being must posit other rational beings. Therefore, Fichte contends that a human being can become a human being only within a community of human beings. In Fichte's thought, the concept of human being refers not to an

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 63.

²⁵⁸ Fichte, *Foundation of Natural Right*, (1795-96) trans. Frederick Neuhouser (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), [33], §3.

²⁵⁹ Hohler, 64.

²⁶⁰ Williams, "The Question of the Other in Fichte's Thought" in *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, 145.

individual but to the species.²⁶¹ He maintains that the possibility of human being depends on free reciprocal exchange of knowledge, which is the hallmark of humanity and only in such a condition can the human subject assert oneself as a human being.²⁶² In this argument, Fichte introduces the importance of community for self-realization, a notion that becomes the centerpiece in Hegel's ethical thought. What this amounts to is that the Ego is not as independent in the absolute sense in which Fichte it in his *Doctrine of Knowledge*.

Fichte points to the significance of positing oneself as free and existing with other free human beings. The subject cannot posit the co-existence of rational beings without positing oneself as related to them in a specific relation, the relation of right.²⁶³ According to the principle of right, the subject must recognize rational beings as free and limit one's freedom according to this concept.²⁶⁴ This means that by ascribing ultimate causality to oneself, the subject does the same to others so that the ultimate principle of causality is both within and external to the subject. As a result, a summons is the basis of causality for each subject and the mutual conditioning of each one's activity and the sphere of activity.²⁶⁵ I understand Fichte to mean that in the relation of right, there is a limit as to what the subject can or cannot do and also a physical sphere of activity beyond which a subject cannot cross without breaching the rights of others.

Fichte contends that freedom implies a possibility of overstepping one's sphere of activity, the result of which is deprivation of freedom to another person.²⁶⁶ According to Fichte, original right implies the right to life and the right to exercise one's influence in the sensible world. If these rights are to exist within a free community of rational beings, there is a limit

²⁶¹ Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, [39], §3.

²⁶² Ibid., [40] §3.

²⁶³ Ibid., [41] §4.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., [52] §4.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., [41] §4.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., [43] §4.

within which one can exercise freedom and beyond which it must be coerced. This coercion is for ensuring justice; in Fichte's terms, 'equal original right' to ensure that the concept of right belongs not only to the individual but to all free beings. That means the right to coercion arises only in the event that equal original right is violated.

According to Fichte however, the idea of coercion goes against the concept of right; therefore, this power cannot be entrusted to the individual but to civil legislation. It follows that security of rights is only possible through the unity of will, i.e., agreement. In Fichte's view, the concept of security for all must be made actual in the sensible world.²⁶⁷ For him, realization of the concept of right is made possible in the sensible world through civil contract. Since this will of all is valid for everyone at all time, it becomes a law. Therefore, the will of all determines how far each individual is to exercise freedom according to civil legislation, and the consequences ensuing from violation of this law. The state authority has the right to judge and to execute its judgment; hence, the power of all keeps each person's power to its proper limit so justice is possible.²⁶⁸

George J. Seidel argues that there are implications in understanding the human person as a social being; one cannot exercise one's freedom without limit for then others cannot be free. For the good of all it is necessary to limit one's freedom.²⁶⁹ According to Seidel, the goals of freedom belong to the state collectively as well as to the individual. As a result, these goals must be secured not only for the sake of the individual and the state but also for the sake of all humanity.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 152.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 155.

²⁶⁹ George J. Seidel, *Activity and Ground: Fichte, Schelling and Hegel* (New York, NY: Georg Verlag Hildesheim, 1976), 83.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 84.

Based on close relationship between the state and an individual a just state can be understood as a moral/ethical institution. This is because it is based on the idea of the individual as a rational, therefore, free being. For both Fichte and Kant, freedom in the sense of autonomy is the source of dignity of the human person. Based on the above view, it seems that Fichte's amplification of the separation between right and morality and his argument that the concept of right does not derive from morality is unjustifiable. Both right and morality belong to the same subject.

In the *Foundation of Natural Right* Fichte argues that morality would be in conflict with itself if it is understood as the basis of the concept of right, for right must be enforced while morality cannot.²⁷¹ There is not conflict between morality and enforcement of right as Fichte postulates. This is because the enforcement of rights is not against the will of the individual, for each subject values and wills one's own security of rights to realize one's goals. The state's enforcement is meant only for the individual who wishes to deny the same entitlements to others. Consequently, the concept of right must derive from morality because the principle of morality is the value of the human person. While the place of the principle of right cannot be denied its independence from the moral law is unjustified since the human person is the source and object of both.

Finally, Fichte's view is that the idea of right reaches further than morality. I argue that that if human beings do not have a universal sense of morality that civil law presupposes, no policing in the world would be adequate to curb evil in the whole of humanity. Civil law builds on the individual's sense of self-value. This sense of value is ascribed to other rational beings. Kant refers to this in his view that nothing would have any value if the human person did not

²⁷¹ Fichte, *Foundation of Natural Right*, [54], §4.

value oneself in the first place.²⁷² Consequently, if dignity did not exist in each human person, civil law would not be adequate to govern the subjects who would be radically deprived. The principle of right is therefore, not an end in itself but for guarding the value of the person.

In addition, what rights afford to the human person is considerably minimal compared to what a being needs to be truly human. In order to take another person's goals and projects of life as one's own, morality is required and this arises from the value attached to the human person. In other words, to be committed to another's well-being takes more than right for it cannot be enforced. For this reason, relationships of morality are more far reaching than the relationships of right.

In view of the foregoing discussion, this chapter concludes with a retrieval of the significant feature in Fichte's reconstruction of Kant's theory of ethics. I argue for the plausibility of Fichte's arguments in this issue on the one hand. On the other hand I point to the limitations arising from certain propositions in Fichte's arguments.

In Fichte's analysis the subject has priority over the object regarding the possibility of experience. My understanding is that if experience pertains to how it is possible for human subjects and not objects to experience each other, then Fichte's claim concerning the priority of the subject is plausible. In Fichte's view, experience is an activity of consciousness and only intelligent beings are capable of experiencing.

With regard to the primacy of practical reason, a case can be made concerning the soundness of his arguments. It is only with the presupposition that reason is practical that moral claims can be made. However, it is one thing to claim that reason is practical and quite another to establish that claim. The significance of Fichte's contribution lies in grounding Kant's moral

²⁷² Kant, *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*, §429.

theory by deducing the idea of freedom from the nature of consciousness. This is important not merely for human knowing. In Fichte's view, knowledge is to be applied in the world in which the human subject finds oneself. Therefore, the important question about human existence for Fichte is "What ought I to do?"²⁷³ From this question is born infinite moral responsibility that Fichte characterizes as the 'vocation of man.'

In Schelling's view the subject does not have the privileged position one has in Fichte's analysis. In his introduction to Schelling's discussion on human freedom, James Gutmann indicates that Schelling's position is that humans do not act freely but the divine acting in them.²⁷⁴ Gutmann's reading of Schelling is that since human beings only act within God they act from both necessity and freedom because in God both necessity and freedom are united. In this view the divine is free in that nothing conditions the divine activity but is also necessitated because the divine can only act according to his nature.²⁷⁵ In Schelling's analysis man can only act within the divine freedom and necessity such that freedom is inconceivable outside the divine framework. It follows that since the human beings cannot live outside God, their activity is divine activity.²⁷⁶ Seidel's understanding of Schelling is that freedom is only possible for God, the absolute such that the human freedom of choice is mere appearance. Consequently, human activity is both free and necessitated. Necessity in this context is acting according to the divine purposes even though the human beings are not aware of it.²⁷⁷ In this view, the absolute freedom Fichte assigns to human subject is not possible.

²⁷³ Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, ed. William Smith, (La Salle, Illinois: The Open House Publishing Company, 1965), 104.

²⁷⁴ Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann (Chicago, IL: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1936), XXXIX.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., XL.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., §339 –340.

²⁷⁷ Seidel, 113-114.

The problem with Schelling's position is that granted that a human being is determined in the way postulated, it is difficult to know the extent to which this necessity play a role in human choices. In real experience, human beings do not explain conduct in terms of freedom and necessity. Since Schelling's theory does not correspond to rational beings experience of themselves, it is impossible sustain.

In both Kant and Fichte, freedom raises the rational being above one's nature through self-determination. It seems that Fichte's view of the subject goes overboard in his claim that the I can be thought without the world but not vice versa. If Schelling is right in his interpretation of Fichte's idea of the I as the human I, the human subject cannot be thought apart from the world. However, that the subject is responsible for one's experience as an intelligent being, through self-posing activity is a major contribution on Fichte's part. In other words, even though Fichte's theory of representation has limitations, it cannot be rendered altogether useless. Not only does this principle unite the theoretical and practical dimensions of the subject but unites the subject with the object of experience. Most importantly, Fichte uses the theoretical freedom of self-positing activity to account for moral self-determination.

The problem of representation lies in its inadequacy to provide experience/knowledge as objects can be represented without being known. Knowing goes beyond representation. For example, if the subject encounters an object never seen before, one can represent the object as 'other,' in Fichte's terms, 'Not-I'; hence as opposed to self. However the object remains indeterminate. Fichte ignores the role played by culture, language and actual use of objects. Consequently, representation alone cannot yield knowledge/experience. The point is, relating to objects of experience requires a more active encounter than representation can deliver. Representation seems to indicate that something exists but does not say anything about the

significance of the object in relation to the subject or the relation of objects to each other. Knowing something takes on a more dynamic relationship between the subject and object, the kind of knowing articulated in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, things are not known through representation but through being involved with them. In Heidegger's terms *Dasein's* involvement with objects is characterized as 'heedful absorption' in things.²⁷⁸ I take Heidegger's view to indicate a more intimate relation between the subject and things than the one depicted in Fichte's representation theory. In Heidegger's analysis, the relation is more primordial and less reflective.

²⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §72.

CHAPTER III

HEGEL'S ETHICAL THEORY

In the previous chapter the focus was Fichte's reading of Kant's moral theory and the development arising from his critique. Fichte's critique of Kant is important because Hegel's theory emerges from his critique. Hegel claims that Kant's moral theory is abstract and without content. He argues that the latter's moral principles render morality itself impossible owing to their inherent contradictions. Hegel proposes that *ethical life* is the solution to defects in Kant's moral theory. This chapter examines the content of Hegel's critique and his attempt to resolve what he believes, are the problematic issues in Kant's moral principles.

The objective of this chapter is to determine the validity of Hegel's critique and to what extent it can be said to develop Kant's moral theory. The chapter examines prevailing polemics with regard to the two thinkers' theories. Some hold that Kant's theory cannot be transcended much less discarded; others hold that it is legalistic and abstract and should be replaced by a more liberal approach. I argue for the significance of Hegel's contribution towards the development of Kant's moral theory. On the other hand, I point to limitations in Hegel's ethical theory citing certain principles in Kant's moral theory that remain relevant in forming the basis of any sound moral/ethical formulation. One such principle is Kant's notion of human dignity as the principle determining exercise of human freedom.

This chapter comprises five sections. Section A examines the idea of freedom from the perspectives of Kant, Fichte and Hegel. The importance of this section is to highlight each thinker's understanding of freedom for their respective theories hinges on this concept. Section B analyzes Hegel's idea of 'abstract right.' The notion of abstract right is crucial in Hegel's

ethical formulation because it characterizes the individual's awareness of freedom expressed in various aspects of personal life. For Hegel, it is impossible to speak of ethics without a proper grounding of the idea of 'abstract right'. Section C examines Hegel's critique of morality. For him, morality is a necessary transition from individual freedom manifest in the concept of right. The significance of this section is that it contains Hegel's critique of Kant's view of morality. Hegel's critique is an attempt to gauge the dualism he holds that renders morality in Kantian terms untenable. According to Hegel, dualism is between the particular and universal aspects of morality, happiness and morality and human and divine. Section D explores Hegel's notion of 'ethical life.' Ethical life embraces (1) the family (2) the civil society and (3) the state. This section deciphers the content of these concepts. Section E examines the role the concept of 'recognition' plays in Hegel's ethical thought. For Hegel, recognition is the condition for the possibility both of 'abstract right' and ethical life.

A

Kant, Fichte, and Hegel on Freedom

All thinkers from ancient to our day agree that morality is a problem of freedom. Kant, Fichte, and Hegel consider freedom to be the ultimate principle for the possibility of moral/ethical claims. Accordingly, freedom is the hinge on which the moral theories of these thinkers revolve.

In Kant's moral theory, freedom is autonomy, or reason's self-legislation. His moral theory aims to deduce the ultimate ground of our moral judgment, and he locates this ground in the freedom of a moral agent. In *Foundations*, Kant states:

It is not enough to ascribe freedom to our will, on whatever grounds, if we do not also have sufficient grounds for attributing it to all rational beings. For since morality serves as a law for us only as rational beings, it must hold for all rational beings, and since it must be derived exclusively from the property of freedom, freedom as property of the will of all rational beings must be demonstrated.²⁷⁹

The above text indicates Kant understands rationality and freedom to be essentially one. Based on the property of the freedom of a rational being, moral claims can be made and responsibility attached to human conduct. Consequently, the basis of Kant's moral formulation is the idea of the freedom of human nature.

In his moral theory, Fichte aims to provide a firmer foundation for Kant's deduction of freedom. Fichte holds that although Kant's moral theory has its basis in practical reason, he does not establish how reason is practical. For Fichte, without such a deduction, Kant's moral theory falters. Tracing freedom from the nature of reason itself, Fichte argues for a synonymous relation between law and freedom. For him, freedom is neither deduced from moral law nor moral law

²⁷⁹ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, §447.

from freedom as Kant has it; rather, both are one and the same.²⁸⁰ The place of freedom in Fichte's thought can be better appreciated by noting that knowledge and morality stand on the same principle, practical reason, and without it both knowledge and morality are impossible.²⁸¹

In Hegel's ethical theory, freedom is the ultimate goal. In his terms, "...the good is freedom realized."²⁸² On this premise, Hegel's theory of ethics diverges from that of Kant's and Fichte's because he aims to show that abstract right, morality, and 'ethical life' are all distinct phases that the subject realizes freedom.²⁸³

Since for Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, moral /ethical problems are to do with freedom, it remains an issue as to how each understands freedom. According to Kant, freedom is a means for the realization of the *highest good*.²⁸⁴ From his perspective, freedom is not the ultimate end but has as its ultimate end as realization of the *highest good*, which comprises morality and happiness. Seidel's reading of Fichte is that the latter's conception of freedom is that it is the ultimate goal of human existence.²⁸⁵ I take this to mean that human activity itself is the realization of freedom. It seems then that Fichte views freedom differently from Kant. For Hegel, freedom is the end and absolute good. The difference between Fichte and Hegel is that for Fichte, freedom is an immediate fact of consciousness. On the contrary, Hegel views Fichte's understanding of freedom as abstract because it has not made itself actual. In George Seidel's interpretation of Hegel, one is free only in the context of society.²⁸⁶ If Seidel is right, Hegel's idea of freedom is more encompassing than Fichte's and Kant's. Kant and Fichte understand

²⁸⁰ Fichte, *The Science of Ethics* 58.

²⁸¹ Idem, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova Methodo* 163, §5, sec. 61.

²⁸² G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*. trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press 1977), §129.

²⁸³ Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 31.

²⁸⁴ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 362.

²⁸⁵ Seidel, 82.

freedom as a fact, whereas freedom for Hegel is a process that culminates in a rationally organized state.

Terry Pinkard argues that Hegel rejects Kant's idea of freedom in that for Hegel, freedom is not outside nature; that is, not a non-natural or 'transcendental' causality as Kant claims; rather, it is the human beings' capacity to stand against inclination, desire and impulses.²⁸⁷

Both Kant and Hegel hold that the will is a practical reason of acting according to principles, but Hegel disagrees that a distinct causality is needed for the will to so act. For Hegel, freedom is the position we take in relation to our actions. According to Pinkard, to be free is to act according to reasons that are one's own as a subject.²⁸⁸ It follows that for an agent's impulses and desires to have a normative status, they must be incorporated to the overall life project of who one is. Pinkard's analysis is relevant because although the subject must adapt principles consistent with one's true identity, in Hegel's thought identity is not an abstract truth but a synthesis of the 'I and We'.

To have a will means three things: first, the ability to order one's actions according to practical commitments arising from one's life project. Second, having a will means the ability to reflect on those commitments in relation to other important ends and principles that one upholds. Finally, having a will means to take these commitments as one's own, as opposed to their being imposed from without, or against one's will. Consequently, not to be free is to act according to something one cannot rationally justify for oneself.²⁸⁹

Hegel argues that freedom is not something outside of nature: the question is whether he considers all natural beings to be free. Although Hegel's reading of Kant is that the will needs a

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 202.

²⁸⁷ Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: Biography*, (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University press, 2000), 473.

‘non-natural’ causality, it remains an issue as to what Kant means by ‘non-natural.’ My understanding is that Kant claims that rational beings are not driven by natural necessity as non-rational beings are; rather, any action for which one can claim responsibility is a result of deliberation. In Kant’s terms, this is “to act according to conception of laws.”²⁹⁰ Consequently, while freedom in one sense means freedom from external interference, for Kant this is a negative sense of freedom. True freedom means acting from objective and therefore universal principles arising from conception of laws. It is for this reason that Kant limits true freedom to rational activity as opposed to activity in non-rational beings.

Hegel’s position is that the only freedom worth the term is ‘absolute freedom.’ According to Hegel, free will can be so construed only if it is absolutely free. He explains that only in freedom without qualification can the will be said to be free because it relates to itself free from any dependency. In Hegel’s view, freedom of the will is truth itself because in it there is correspondence between the concept of itself and what it is as an object.²⁹¹ Therefore, Hegel’s view of the absolute good is not happiness but freedom. This is not capricious freedom of the individuals but the universal freedom that transcends particular wills and has attained a synthesis of the particular and the universal.²⁹² As will be shown in this chapter, such synthesis is realized in ‘the ethical life,’ the state. .

Hegel is right in his characterization of freedom as a good, but can freedom be the absolute good.? The answer to this question is alluded to in Schelling’s treatise on human freedom. According to Schelling freedom is capacity not only for good but a capacity for both good and evil. Heidegger’s interpretation of Schelling is that this is the most comprehensive

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 474.

²⁹⁰ Kant, *Foundations*, §412.

conception of freedom. He argues that it is a one sided view to understand freedom as a capacity only for good for with human freedom comes also the reality of evil.²⁹³ While it is not the aim in this study to go into detail on the question of evil as a metaphysical problem, it suffices to note that freedom cannot be characterized as absolute good without qualification for with human freedom comes not only the creation of good but also the moral evil. For this reason, in freedom both human grandeur and misery coincide. This reality is reflected in Hegel's civil society and is discussed in later sections. Hegel's characterization of freedom is that human understanding of the latter evolves both in the way it is understood and manifested in human life. The first phase of freedom is what is characterized as abstract right. It is to this notion the study proceeds.

B

Abstract Right

The concept of right concerns individual freedom, which is expressed in various ways in a person's life. Hegel argues that freedom pertains to an individual as a 'person' only and not to other relations that distinguish one person from another. Since the idea of a person also presupposes that there are other persons, the injunction of this right is: "Be a person and respect others as persons."²⁹⁴

Hegel's proposition about abstract right reiterates a position held by Fichte in *Foundations of Natural Right*, in which the imperative is to limit one's freedom so that others can exercise the same freedom.²⁹⁵ Concerning the idea of right, Hegel holds that abstract right is

²⁹¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §22-23.

²⁹² Ibid., §129 -130.

²⁹³ Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, ed. Joan Stambaugh (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), 97.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., §35 - 36.

²⁹⁵ Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, §41, sec. 52.

subjective; for a person to actually exist, freedom must be objectified. According to Hegel, objectification of will is realized in ownership of property. Hegel insists that property must be understood as an external manifestation of freedom rather than mere satisfaction of one's needs.²⁹⁶ In the former view, the emphasis is on the person as a rational being as opposed to a brute. It is characteristic of a rational being to own property. I take this to imply that since rationality implies a capacity to set ends, there must be means to attain those ends. Property is a means not only for satisfaction of needs but also for realization of higher purposes. In other words, property is a means for self-actualization. However, ownership must be 'recognized' by others for it to be valid.²⁹⁷ The motif of 'recognition' is pivotal in Hegel's ethical theory and will be treated later in the chapter. In the meantime, it suffices to note that 'recognition' by other rational beings is a condition for realization of individual freedom.

Hegel contends that the idea of right is not concerned with how much one owns; rather, it is concerned with freedom of personality; therefore, property which is contingent on particular elements such as abilities, aims, and needs, falls outside of abstract right.²⁹⁸ Hegel explains this position in terms of equality of personality considered in universal sense. Hegel's notion of abstract right occupies a central position in his theory of human freedom. Although abstract right is a capricious type of freedom, it is freedom nevertheless. In his view, any other type of freedom has its basis from abstract right.

According to Hegel's theory of abstract right, it is necessary that rational beings enter into contractual relationships with one another. For Hegel, rationality requires this relationship. The significance of this element is that contracts are the medium of human relationships. Hegel

²⁹⁶ Ibid., §41.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., §51.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., §49.

contends that the important characteristic of property is its externality and so exists for another since the other is in relations with it. In addition, property is an objectification of the will. Accordingly, the other for whom property exists is another person. Consequently, property is a will existing for another and this becomes the basis for existence of objective freedom. Contract then serves as the principle of mediation of the will.²⁹⁹ An important element in Hegel's notion of abstract right is that it is on the basis of the latter that he justifies the idea of private property since property is objectification of freedom. This position commits Hegel to explain the status of those without property. The later problem becomes the basis of Marx's criticism against Hegel for in Marx's view private property is the cause of alienation. The problem alienation and Marx's attempt to resolve it addressed in later sections.

C

Hegel's Critique of Morality

Many of Hegel's readers see his dissatisfaction with morality to be its abstraction from the context of society. Limitations of a moral view are articulated in Hugh Reyburn's text:

Morality is individualistic; ethical life must be social; Duty is a formal principle; ethical life must be concrete. The freedom claimed by moral consciousness is ultimately capricious and indeterminate; the ethical will must manifest necessity. The moral sphere is subjective; the ethical order must be objective.³⁰⁰

Some scholars share Reyburn's views while others differ in varying degrees. My view is that Reyburn's analysis of morality is incomplete. One discovers that Hegel appropriates many of Kant's principles; for instance, the universality of ethics and the place of the subject is paramount to both thinkers. Both Kant and Hegel agree that freedom is the condition for the

²⁹⁹ Ibid., §71.

³⁰⁰ Hugh A. Reyburn, *The Ethical Theory of Hegel: A Study of the Philosophy of Right*. (Oxford, Great Britain: Clarendon Press 1921), 197.

possibility of moral/ethical claims. For this reasons, it is incorrect to characterize morality and ‘ethical life’ as opposites as Reyburn’s analysis suggests.

To agree with Hegel’s ethical theory one need not subscribe to the whole of his philosophical system. However, there are concepts that characterize his entire system without which his ethical thought cannot be fully appreciated. Those concepts are the context in which his ethical thought acquires significance. Therefore, I would like to focus on Hegel’s idea of ‘development’ and ‘mediation’.

The spirit that characterizes Hegel’s system is, “The true is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence of consummating itself through its development.”³⁰¹ Hegel’s statement is pivotal not only in his theory of knowledge but also in his practical philosophy. The important concepts in Hegel’s proposition are ‘the whole’ and ‘development’. In Hegel’s view, ‘the whole’ with respect to truth encompasses the beginning, the process, and the goal. Based on the position of ‘the true as the whole,’ Hegel contends that a holistic conception of truth must take into consideration not only the genesis but also the process and the goal. For him truth holistically considered is a ‘development,’ that takes place through various stages. This idea is captured in his claim, “The real issue is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but in carrying it, nor is the result the actual whole but rather, the result together with the process, through which it comes about.”³⁰² Hegel explains that the aim or the goal is a ‘lifeless universal’ and the process which he characterizes as a ‘guiding tendency’ is an ‘empty drive’ and the goal is a ‘corpse’ which has no content if it is detached from the labor that leads to it.³⁰³ The claim Hegel makes in

³⁰¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §20.

³⁰² Ibid., §3.

³⁰³ Ibid.

the above argument is that with respect to truth, we can settle neither for the beginning, nor the process, nor the goal, but that all must be considered.

Concerning the development of truth, Hegel argues that immediate knowledge is the lowest kind of knowledge, even though it seems the richest and truest owing to its direct accessibility. The limitation of immediate knowledge arises from the fact that it pertains to the being of the object without considering its relation to other beings. Owing to the abstract nature of immediate knowledge, the subject remains a pure 'I' and the object a pure 'this'. The idea of this proposition is that the two are not yet related in a dynamic fashion that transforms the subject through reflection on various aspects of the object. Hegel contends that the truth of self-certainty lacks the development effected by the process of 'mediation'.³⁰⁴

The concept of 'mediation' in Hegel's argument is central; it refers to the principle which the human knowing must consider. For Hegel, knowledge of objects is not as direct as it seems; rather, it takes place through relationship to other objects with the result that knowledge is not 'immediate' but 'mediated' through multiple relations.

Hegel's position is that moral consciousness is a development and is complete only if it considers the 'development process' on the part of consciousness. This is the focal point of Hegel's ethical thought and has significant bearing on its formulation. In his critique of Kant, Hegel aims to develop Kant's theory rather than to demolish and build anew in the Cartesian sense. Hegel holds that each stage of development of self-consciousness has its truth on which subsequent phases stand. For Hegel, 'preservation' and 'displacement' are important characteristics in the evolution of consciousness.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Ibid., §90.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., §113.

Hegel, further maintains that holistic consideration of ethics means development through a process of reflection within the wider human community. Since development takes place through various phases, no single phase can exhaust the whole. Since the ethical emerges only in and through a process, what is ethical will be expressed differently at different phases of human history despite the continuity of various elements. As will be shown later, Hegel's position has both positive and negative facets.

Hegel's view differs from Kant's regarding the 'ultimate' source of morality. For Kant, the ultimate source of morality is divine. Although moral law is a command of reason, it is ultimately a divine law and specific duties are God's commands.³⁰⁶ Hegel contends that morality is not demanded but emerges in the process of consciousness itself.³⁰⁷

The difficulty in Hegel's position concerns how universal standard of what is right is possible since evolution of consciousness cannot be in the same phase for all people at the same time everywhere. Hegel's position implies that each society would have its own ethics. The question concerns the basis on which any other society would reproach another for its degradation of human life since each society can legitimize its own stage of consciousness as true and valid for it. On the other hand, if Hegel is referring to universal consciousness, it is not clear how the latter is possible. Further, Hegel's view of development of consciousness seems to suggest that this development is progressive with succeeding phases being better than preceding ones. However, this is difficult to establish. Technological development may indicate progression; modern warfare may indicate a regression. It is difficult to judge whether evolution of consciousness is a development or a regression.

³⁰⁶ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, §130.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., §103.

The two thinkers part company over the relation of divine to the human, and is treated in the next chapter. For the present, it suffices to note that for Hegel, the human is in divine and the divine in the human. In Jean Hyppolite's terms, 'man becomes the other consciousness that he perceives to be God so that the divine and the human are identical.'³⁰⁸

Hegel's critique of morality is directed against the idea that the value of moral action lies in one's motive so that individual conscience determines how one ought to treat the other. From this view, morality is seen to depend on personal judgment of the agent irrespective of rules in the social world. Right, on the contrary, demands compliance with respect to the rights of others irrespective of the motive.³⁰⁹ Given the above claims on the abstract right and the right of conscience, Hegel recognizes their significance but insists that they are not adequate to realize a lasting community that Kant seeks in his moral principles.

It is possible to see why it would be dangerous to rely only on conscience to determine what is right; many evils have been committed in clear conscience. However, I do not think that Kant is arguing from the perspective of a conscience in isolation from society's standard of what is right. The issue is who determines what is universally right. For Hegel, the law of the state determines what is ethical. In Kant's view, the determinant is another human being whose freedom limits the exercise of one's freedom. The central issue pertains to what can guarantee that this principle is not violated. Is the matter to be left to the individual conscience and if not how is this dilemma to be resolved? Hegel's ethical theory with all its ramifications is geared toward resolution of this issue. In other words, Hegel's objective is to secure the same freedom

³⁰⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977), 482.

³⁰⁹ Z.A. Pelczynski, *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 8.

of the human being as Kant does through the ‘categorical imperative’ but through the distinct route of ‘ethical life’.

According to Hegel, consciousness must be ‘for itself’ in order to exist; that is, consciousness must relate to itself. Since consciousness is by mediation through an ‘other,’ an object cannot effect this mediation. Self-consciousness is effected by recognition by another subject. Consequently, self-consciousness can only exist for another self-consciousness.³¹⁰ Hegel’s argument aims to show that self-consciousness arises from intersubjective relations rather than from subject and object. As will be shown, the subject is also an object by virtue of its relation to itself, yet it knows itself to be not a mere object.

Hegel’s position reiterates Fichte’s position that a person can be human only among other human beings. The presence of other human beings is what makes possible ‘Spirit’. From Hegel’s standpoint, Spirit is realized in the unity of different consciousnesses. Spirit for Hegel is characterized as ‘independence’ and ‘opposition,’ which makes possible the experience of freedom. In Hegel’s terms, “the I becomes the We and We becomes I. In this unity arises the reality of Spirit.”³¹¹ This implies that the community is reflected in the individual because without the individuals there is no community. Conversely, the individual is reflected in the community because the individual cannot be without others; that is, self-realization is only possible through the community of other human beings. Accordingly, there is a mediation of self-actualization through the community and the community through the individual.

In abstract right, free will is an immediate object opposed to the world. As such, the will relates to itself as individual with its purposes and desires. Based on the principle of mediation,

³¹⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §175.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, §177.

this is not true freedom because it has not developed beyond the self. The freedom pertinent to the concept of right is therefore negative.³¹²

In Hegel's analysis, abstract right develops to morality. In relation to morality, Reyburn argues that for Hegel, mind is not merely an internal sphere but external as well because in rational activity the mind manifests itself in the objective world. According to Reyburn, in morality a person rises to the sphere of a subject by reflecting the will to the self.³¹³

Reyburn's interpretation of Hegel is that there is a continuity in preservation of right so that both abstract right and morality are developments of the concept of freedom. Accordingly, the right of property passes on to right of rationality in one's actions. The implication of this transition is that each subject understands the self as autonomous and the only principles recognized as rational are subjective principles.³¹⁴ I take this to mean that the subject's appropriation of one's own actions in terms of responsibility belong to the subjective right of self-determination. Reyburn argues that this is a distinct understanding of freedom from one embodied in property. Freedom in this sphere is autonomy of the will, a right to self-determination.³¹⁵ However, the subject is for itself; that is, one acts only on what one recognizes as right in one's conscience. Consequently, subjectivity is opposed to universality. For Hegel, the difference between subjectivity and objectivity is not yet a synthesis of 'ethical life' and so universality of morality is not explicit. Hegel's criticism against morality is that it is subjective and cannot avoid capriciousness. Hegel further argues that anything can pass for moral maxim, with the result that even an immoral conduct can be justified as duty to others.³¹⁶

³¹² Idem, *Philosophy of Right*, §35 - 36.

³¹³ Reyburn, 164.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 163.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §645 – 6.

Hegel's characterization of morality gives the impression that anything can pass for morality. If this were what Kant means by morality, it hardly deserves the term. For Kant however, morality is transcendental in that it arises from the idea of freedom and it is teleological in that its goal is social. Consequently, the moral standards cannot have its basis on individual whims. Morality is not an idea in the mind, but a standard of how one person must treat the other(s). In actual relationships not anything can pass for morality because certain conducts conflict with the good of the community.

Although there is emphasis on conscience in morality, conscience is not license to do whatever one feels. Individual conscience though individual is socially informed for humans do not lead a solitary existence; they think and judge in a community setting. In public, one cannot universalize just any conduct. It is for this reason that individual caprice is private and has no place in the community. It seems that Hegel denies morality the vital place it has in society.

Walsh argues for the place of the individual in morality by pointing out that it takes the individual commitment to adhere to what is moral because it involves the will.³¹⁷ The subjective aspect of morality is central because the individual must be willing to adapt principles that are in keeping with the good of the community.

Hegel argues that duty is pure thought and so has not become actual. In this he means that duty is an immediate object of consciousness. According to Hegel, this is opposed to 'moral self-consciousness', because morality is realized in action, pure duty is mere thought and so the subject's consciousness is not a 'moral self-consciousness'. He adds that duty, as immediate

³¹⁷ W. H. Walsh, *Hegelian Ethics* (London, Great Britain: Macmillan and Co Ltd., 1969), 16.

knowledge is not adequate for knowledge, it is by mediation. In his view, the subject and duty are two independent realities.³¹⁸

Since consciousness is independent from duty, it is free from it, and duty is also free, with the result that each relates only to itself. For Hegel, this is the absolute independence that exists between morality and nature. It arises from Kant's separation of morality from nature. The result is 'indifference' since nature has its own laws irrespective of morality, which is also absolute in its own purity.³¹⁹

Hegel is referring to Kant's position that for any action to have moral value it must be done 'for the sake of duty' and not for any other motive. If pure duty means unmixed with 'nature' it is not difficult to see that this position is problematic. Hegel's critique of Kant is therefore justifiable, for separation of morality and one's needs is an impossible enterprise. In acting, the whole person must be involved. Hyppolite advances this argument by indicating that duty unmixed with nature is duty without activity for activity is mixed with inclination. Hyppolite's understanding of Hegel is that action is a transition from pure thought the mediation of which is sensuousness. It follows that since every action is imbued with impulse morality must be compatible with sensuousness for it to be actual.³²⁰

Hegel contends that at the moment one acts, morality and nature are united, and the separation of duty and nature is annulled, resulting in displacement of the idea of pure duty. According to Hegel, nature is related to consciousness for consciousness is also nature, which means inclination is also consciousness. Inclination is involved in acting and so separation of inclination from morality is also annulled, with result that duty is made compatible with

³¹⁸Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §599.

³¹⁹ Ibid., §600.

³²⁰ Hyppolite, 484.

sensuousness.³²¹ Hegel points out the contradiction in Kant's position that one must act if duty is to be actual. However, once the subject acts, duty is mixed with nature. Consequently, one cannot be said to fulfill one's duty in the Kantian sense of the term. In his criticism against Kant, Hegel does not realize that Kant's theory of morality does not preclude nature; rather, his argument is that in morality, it is not by inclinations that one judges what is right. Indeed, at times one acts contrary to the dictates of inclinations.

Hegel notes another contradiction in the relation of happiness to morality. According to Hegel there are two states of consciousness, the moral and the non-moral. The former seeks coincidence of morality and happiness whereas the latter is about self-fulfillment. Hegel argues that since nature as such is indifferent to human happiness, moral consciousness is dissatisfied with its status because its morality does not coincide with happiness. The non-moral consciousness on the other hand, finds its fulfillment in activity and derives happiness thereof.³²² In Hegel's argument it is not clear what he means by 'non-moral' consciousness. If a 'non-moral' consciousness can find happiness in mere activity whatever, it would seem that even a sadist can be happy for it is a non-moral consciousness.

According to Hegel, morality cannot be detached from happiness. Duty is individual self-consciousness in fulfillment of duty. As such, duty is in the doing of it, and in the act of duty happiness is realized. For Hegel, this happiness is not immediate feeling but arises from a deeper level. It is happiness that is a result of self-actualization.³²³ According to this line of thinking, pure duty is impossible and so morality cannot be actual. For this reason, Hegel points out that

³²¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §603.

³²² Ibid., §601.

³²³ Ibid., 602,

the moral self-consciousness should not complain as there is actually no morality if morality means 'pure duty' in the Kantian sense.

The significance of Hegel's argument here is that he does away with dualism in morality. In Hegel's view, the subject is entitled to happiness in moral activity. This is contrary to Kant's position, which is that the only true happiness arises from acting for the respect of the moral law, which is universal. For Hegel, the action that is directed toward fulfillment of one's duty is the same action through which the subject realizes its goals of self-actualization.

The real issue pertains to individual good as opposed to universal good. Hegel argues that the subject puts into activity what is of interest to oneself. Consequently, a determinate content pertains to the embodiment of needs, the satisfaction of which is happiness.³²⁴ Thus, to separate the subjective from the objective is an abstraction. It amounts to claiming that the presence of subjective satisfaction is the only aim of the subject. So understood, the objective ends are only seen as means to personal ends. Hegel insists that the subject is a configuration of actions and if these actions are worthless, the subjectivity of willing is meaningless as well.³²⁵ Along this line of thinking, self-satisfaction is necessary for objectivity of action. What Hegel is pointing out here is that whatever the objectivity an action might be intended to accomplish, it must be of some interest to the subject or else it is not possible.

While Hegel's argument is plausible in the sense that happiness and morality cannot be separated, the question to be answered is, if one and the same action accomplishes both subjective good and universal good, how come poverty is so pervasive a problem in the modern society? It seems that conceptually, Hegel's argument holds but in reality it falls apart. This issue will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

Further, Hegel does not seem to address the whole of Kant's problem concerning the individual vs. the universal good. Kant's point is that there is a difference between having a sense of self-fulfillment as a result of doing what is right as opposed to doing evil, for even a sadist finds self-fulfillment and happiness. Kant is making a distinction between the sources of happiness some of which are unjustifiable. That duty is limited to Kant's meaning is doubtful, but certainly, his argument is valid from this perspective.

Hegel argues that the unity of morality and nature means that morality must always be postponed to distant future, because the moment this unity is effected, morality ceases to be, for morality means struggle against inclination.³²⁶ In this argument, Hegel is alluding to Kant's position that finite rational beings can never attain morality for morality means a complete unity of will and the moral law, which is impossible for human beings who struggle with inclinations. In Kant's view, the best human beings can do is to approximate the union of will and moral law, and this means infinite moral progress.³²⁷

Hegel points out that emphasis on pure duty has various consequences: First, it places the 'moral self-consciousness' in consciousness other than the actual moral agent. He maintains that when an action has taken place, it divides into many duties, and these duties are not sacred because they do not fall under pure duty. However, they are necessary, as morality is fulfilled in action, a relation between will and the world. Since these duties have to be in a moral consciousness, they exist in divine consciousness, other than the human agent. Hegel concludes that the particular duties exist in the moral being, who sanctifies them as duties. The divine being knows and wills them as duties. In this context, duty exists but in another consciousness who

³²⁴ Ibid., §123.

³²⁵ Ibid., §124.

³²⁶ Ibid., §603.

mediates between pure duty and specific duties. Hegel argues that in particular actions the self is individual, and actions must have the actual world as their purpose. Yet as it stands, duty is in another consciousness, the divine lawgiver. For Hegel, this position is problematic because consciousness knows to be holy only what it sanctifies. For this reason, consciousness sees itself as imperfect because its morality is imbued with sensuousness. In Hegel's view morality exists for consciousness, since it has to act, but the same morality does not exist, for it exists in another.³²⁸

The second problem of pure duty is that it abstracts the action from its consequences. Hegel argues that in 'acting' knowing and willing of pure duty are related as a complex reality. In this complexity it is difficult to determine which one is duty among the many duties.³²⁹ In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel advances this argument:

The freely acting will, in directing its aim on the state of affairs confronting it, has an idea of the attendant circumstances. But because the will is finite, since this state of affairs is presupposed, the objective phenomenon is contingent so far as the will is concerned, and may contain something other than what the will's idea of it contains....³³⁰

What Hegel is arguing is that in pure duty one wills to accomplish a given purpose. However, the situation on which the subject is to act is presupposed. Owing to the limited nature of human knowledge, it is impossible to comprehend all the circumstances surrounding the situation, which means, the situation may or may not be as the agent knows it. Hegel explains that the will's right is to recognize and to accept responsibility only for what it intends with its actions. Consequently, the agent cannot be blamed for what it did not know or intend as the goal of one's actions. According to Hegel, the agent has a right to deny any responsibility for consequences

³²⁷ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, §123.

³²⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §606.

³²⁹ Ibid., §605.

³³⁰ Idem, *Philosophy of Right*, §117.

that are not within one's intention.³³¹ He insists that the principles of "ignoring the consequences" or "regard only the consequences" as right or wrong are both abstract maxims arising from understanding. For Hegel, consequences are part of an action and inseparable from it.³³²

The difficulty in the foregoing arguments is that consequences of an action can be far reaching into the distant future. It remains an issue as to how far the agent can be held guilty for those consequences given all the variables factors besides the agent. In addition Hegel gives the impression that owing to the limit of human knowledge, the situation may or may not be as the agent knows it as one cannot determine the consequences with precision. This could be true only to a certain extent. For the most part human beings act as a result of certain understanding of the situation and so there is unity of thought and action. Consequently, it is not justifiable for agent to subdue other people's interests under one's interest under the auspice of ignorance as Hegel seems to conclude.

Hegel's criticism is also directed against the 'moral ought'. According to Hegel, the 'ought' in morality never attains reality. He holds that what is, is universally valid; therefore, what ought to be *actually* is. For Hegel, what merely ought to be is not real and so has no truth.³³³ Hegel's argument is directed against Kant's position that morality is concerned with what ought to be, even if it does not take place. In Hegel's argument, he equates what is universally valid to be actually operative in human life. But this is mistaken assumption. For example, the fact that respecting other's property is a valid proposition, human being still find reasons not to respect others property. Ethical decision is made anew and until one makes the

³³¹ Ibid., §118.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §249.

decision to act that way it is still not actual. If what ‘ought to be’ *actually* is as Hegel holds, there would be no need for law enforcement. The fact that it is there it implies that what ought to be is not yet actual. Hegel’s problem is to hold that what ought to be is, but this position has the problem of ignoring the process through which thought and reality coalesce. For instance that substantive freedom is the synthesis of subjective and objective freedom, it does not follow that in at all times this is the case for individuals can and do violate what is so understood as substantive freedom.

Hegel’s criticism of morality distinguishes what can be enforced and what cannot. He suggests that civil law can be enforced but morality cannot, for morality has to do with one’s disposition and falls outside the law. Seidel interprets Hegel to mean that ‘moral ought’ has inherent circularity and only results in infinity, for what ‘ought to be’ is grounded on the same ‘ought,’ that is, one ought to do something because one ought to do it.³³⁴

If Seidel is right, there is a misinterpretation of Kant on Hegel’s part. In Kant’s theory, ‘moral ought’ has humanity as end. In reading Kant, this is the point of his *formula of humanity as end in itself*. As such, the charge of circularity on ‘ought’ in morality is incorrect. In addition, what ought to be the case is not limited to what is enforced; rather, it also means the ‘necessity’ of acting. What one ought to do does not necessarily mean what is enforced. Morality falls into the category of what one ‘ought’ to do not because it is enforced, but because it is consistent with what is right. Consequently, the ‘ought’ in morality is internal to self.

Although Hegel and Kant use the concept ‘ought’ they have different meaning for it. For Kant, ought is limited to a moral command. On the contrary, the ought in Hegel’s thought extends to all nature. Herbert Marcuse’s reading of Hegel is that ‘oughtness’ is a call to ‘self-

determination.' in all beings. According to Marcuse, this determination is not only a limit but a limitation indicating what a thing 'ought' to be. Understood from this perspective, ought is an imperative for a thing to go beyond itself, to be something other and in so doing, becomes itself.³³⁵ In Marcuse's interpretation of Hegel, 'ought' has an ontological meaning and refers to all actual becoming and not just the moral self-determination. According to Marcuse, Hegel's thought unifies the human and the world that in Kant's pure ethics remain separated.³³⁶

The conception of ontological imperative leaves unanswered question, the difference between being determined and self-determination that Fichte and Kant clearly make. Human beings are not determined to become. The non-rational beings cannot choose otherwise than their natural determination. Human's becoming in the ethical sense is a result of understanding and knowledge so that there is deliberation and choice. Consequently, only human beings can be confronted with a moral imperative both from within and without.

Jonathan Robinson claims that the problem of morality for Hegel pertains to 'real' and 'ideal'. Robinson holds that the value of morality cannot be judged from the success in its transformation of the world, but in persistence in moral activity; simultaneously, the goal of morality is to change the world from what it is to what it ought to be.³³⁷

Robinson's argument is crucial regarding whether Hegel can dispense with the moral 'ideal'. Can Hegel maintain both positions; that is, dispense with a moral ideal and uphold moral concerns that face society in all periods of history? I argue that whether one understands morality in terms of the Kantian 'categorical imperative' or in Hegelian sense of 'ethical life,'

³³⁴ Seidel, 202.

³³⁵ Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology and Theory of History*, trans. Swyla Benhabib, (Boston, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1987), 57.

³³⁶ Ibid., 58.

the 'ideal' is indispensable in human activity, moral, ethical or otherwise. Human beings generally refuse to settle for the given and have a propensity to strive higher. Moral responsibility is infinite, not in the sense of inability to fulfill its demands but because there are always new situations arising. This means, that one act cannot exhaust present and future responsibilities in a single stroke.

With regard to 'real' and 'ideal,' human beings base present acts on future aspirations. Heidegger's view of the temporality of human *Da-sein* is of great insight here. "*Da-sein* is its possibility."³³⁸ The idea is that self-determination is concerned with a future vision of oneself and the world. The significance of Heidegger's thought is that what ought to be is not an empty idea for it determines the present of the human *Da-sein*.

I assert that Morality/ethics is a life-long responsibility, and that the world about which morality/ethics revolves can always be better than it is: there can be less destitution in the world, more prevention of diseases, more literacy etc. These achievements are ideals that can be realized. Hegel argues against the moral ideal as inadequate to change the world. In his view the moral ought is an empty concept without truth because truth is 'what is.' Hegel's position is captured in his statement on the role of philosophy:

To comprehend what is, is the role of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts. ... If his theory really goes beyond the world as it is and builds an ideal one as it ought to be, that world exists indeed, but only in his opinions, as unsubstantial element where anything you please may, in fancy, be built.³³⁹

The above text reveals what Hegel holds to be the place of philosophy in the world; to understand reality. Reality for Hegel is not the phenomenal but the unchanging beneath the contingent. What is real is the divine aspect of reality. Even accepting the role of philosophy as

³³⁷ Jonathan Robinson, *Duty and Hypocrisy in Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: An Essay in the Real and Ideal*, (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 7.

³³⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §42 – 43.

Hegel has it, one can deny that this is its ultimate goal. Human knowing/understanding is not for mere contemplation, but has as its end as enabling human beings to order their lives according to that knowledge. There is no knowing for its own sake as Aristotle has it in his *Metaphysics*.³⁴⁰ Knowledge has its ultimate goal as ordering of life. Plato ties knowledge to activity in his insistence that once the philosopher has acquired knowledge one must go back to the cave and assume responsibility for enlightening others.³⁴¹ Karl Marx reiterates this same critique when he points out that “Philosophers have interpreted the world in different ways but the important thing is to change it.”³⁴² As will be shown in the next chapter, Marx’s position has considerable implication on Hegel’s philosophy.

In Hegel’s argument the philosopher is distinguished from the citizen but this is an incorrect characterization of the philosopher, who is also a member of the society. Concerning the role of philosophy, Hegel misses its real place in the world when he limits it to understanding reality. For him, philosophy cannot prescribe to the world what it ought to be because it comes to the scene too late.³⁴³ The question is what Hegel means by ‘too late’. It is never too late to enlighten human beings about the best they can become.

D

Ethical Life

Walsh argues that the background from which Hegel formulates his ethical theory is modern society, featuring the family, civil society, and the state. Accordingly, any moral theory

³³⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §11.

³⁴⁰ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. II, 982b, 25.

³⁴¹ Plato: *Plato’s Collected Dialogues*, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), Ch. VII, 519 E.

³⁴² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *German Ideology: Part One with Selections from part II & III and Supplementary Texts* (New York, NY: International Publishers, Co., INC., 1947), 122.

that does not consider these aspects is limited in important respects. In this regard, Hegel's ethical theory exhibits a wider scope than Kant's because it shifts moral emphasis from the individual to the social. In Walsh's view action is important for more reasons than having a good will attached to it.³⁴⁴

Walsh understands Hegel to argue against Kant's position that the only action with moral worth is action done out of 'good will'. According to Walsh, Hegel values the right of the subject to judge as right only what one recognizes as rational, but insists that choice and intention have no value for the moral act other than rendering the action imputable on the agent. Although the right of conscience is the highest subjective right, it is only formal. Consequently, objective right takes priority.³⁴⁵

Robert Williams advances this claim, arguing that the limitation of morality is that although it has a positive relation to others with respect to freedom as its end, it is still individualistic in its approach. Because morality means right of conscience, intentions, and knowledge, the subject is held responsible only for what one knows and intends.³⁴⁶

Hegel identifies ethical life with the realization of freedom, the good. For Hegel, the realization of freedom is the synthesis of individual and universal will. Characteristic of will in this state is 'recognizing' and 'being recognized' by others. Williams points out that an important characteristic of 'ethical life' is that the 'other' is indispensable because one recognizes oneself in the other. I take this to mean that the self depends on the other for self-realization. Williams argues that the 'We' that is the essence of the ethical life is a qualified unity, and not a 'totalization' of others; the self must leave the others free, and acknowledge their

³⁴³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §13.

³⁴⁴ Walsh, *Hegelian Ethics*, 14.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.,

differences. In this transformation, the whole that comprises the individuals, the society, takes priority. Consequently, it is the mediation of the individual through the community that marks the break between the individual and the whole.³⁴⁷

Hegel argues that although subject and object still exist in ethical life, the subject and object are of a distinct kind because the will embodies both particular and universal will in the institution of the family, the civil society, and the state. He explains that crucial in the ethical community is understanding of its unity not only as substance but also as subject, for this unity depends on the consciousness of the members of a given institution. For Hegel, the individual is related to ethical order in such a way that one identifies with it because one is not distinct from the laws and institutions of ethical life. He characterizes the “ethical order” as the “soul of the individual.”³⁴⁸

Hegel contrasts the duties of ‘ethical life’ from those of morality, characterizing the latter as empty and indeterminate, while the former are a synthetic development of ethical necessity. Accordingly, specific levels of ‘ethical life’ are necessary relationships essential for realization of freedom. Hegel’s criticism against morality is that nothing in it indicates the necessity to conform to ethical institutions.³⁴⁹

I disagree with Hegel’s criticism on the above point. In Kant’s ‘Kingdom of Ends’ individual ends are intrinsically related to communal ends. Although Kant is obscure on the relation of morality to state laws and institutions, it does not follow that he ignores the place of these institutions in the moral subject. His idea of perfect and imperfect duties is an indication of

³⁴⁶ Robert R. Williams, *Recognition*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 180.

³⁴⁷ Williams, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1997), 199.

³⁴⁸ *Philosophy of Right*, §147.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, § 148.

his awareness of ethical institutions that reflect the rationality of the people. For Kant, only in this context can freedom be understood in a positive sense. Further, to treat another human being as an end and not a means is a requirement of reason. For this reason, Kant introduces the universality test and the test of non-contradiction. What is missing and what Hegel supplies is the means to realize the freedom Kant postulates in the Kingdom of Ends. Hegel's idea of ethical life is meant to be the concrete means to ensure the same freedom. In Hegel's system of ethical life, to deny this right to another is tantamount to denying oneself the same right. Although morality cannot be enforced, societal laws sanction the dignity and worth of human beings that Kant seeks to secure with the moral law. For Hegel, state laws are ethical and condition of realization of freedom.

Hegel's view of duties is that they are a restriction only to an indeterminate will, or abstract freedom or the moral will, which determine their goods arbitrarily. He argues that the truth of duty is that it sets the moral subject free from natural drives and from the moral 'ought.' Moreover, it liberates the individual from indeterminate subjectivity, which is enclosed in itself without concreteness. In duties of ethical life, there is realization of substantive freedom.³⁵⁰

In view of Hegel's distinction between duties of ethical life and those of morality, he overlooks the fact that there is a paradox in his position on duties that is difficult to avoid. Duties are both freeing and restricting. They are freeing in the Hegel's sense above but on the other hand, human beings as Kant has stated do not always will duties and they tend to extend freedom limitlessly. In this sense, duties restrict this tendency.

In ethical order, the identity of the particular with universal will, right and duty, point to the intrinsic relation between right and responsibility. For Hegel, right and responsibility imply

each other. In Hegel's terms, "Man has rights in so far as he has duties and duties in so far as he has rights."³⁵¹

The principle governing the ethical life at all levels is that of recognition. Objective Spirit requires that there be justice, for without this no community and no freedom is possible among human beings. Williams' reading of Hegel is that the latter's practical philosophy revolves around the notion of recognition at all levels of ethical substance. Recognition facilitates the actualization of justice in the ethical community.³⁵² At this juncture, the discussion proceeds to explore the content of each level of 'ethical life,' *the family, the civil society, and the state*.

I. The Family

The family has a profound place in Hegel's system of ethics. It is the immediate substance; that is, the immediate manifestation of Spirit. Members are not independent persons but parts of a whole, the family.³⁵³ The idea of whole as opposed to a part is significant in Hegel's thought. It implies that the whole of which individual is a part is prior to and above the individual. For Hegel, the family is only a moment not the absolute state of substance for the member's dissolve into civil society wherein they claim their abstract right.³⁵⁴

An important aspect is that the family is an ethical relationship because the basis of its union is not property but the mind and so is a spiritual union consciousness of which is their substantive unity and aim. According to Hegel, though marriage starts with contract it goes

³⁵⁰ Ibid. §149.

³⁵¹ Ibid., §155.

³⁵² Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 200.

³⁵³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §158.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., §159.

beyond it. In contract, each person remains individual. On the contrary, marriage is based on unity of the mind such that each surrenders one's caprice characteristic of abstract right.³⁵⁵

Williams highlights the differences in marriage as opposed to contractual relationship. The former relationship is based not on property but on unity of mind characteristic of the ethical relationship. Williams argues that Hegel distinguishes contract based on common will from one based on reason. According to Williams, contract is a weak form of objectivity because it lacks a vital element of 'recognition' that is central to an intersubjective relationship in which one recognizes oneself in the other. In the family durability of relationship is central, and the parties are willing to make it a lasting one. Additionally, in marriage the disposition of the parties is necessary, and is seen as essential to those involved in that relationship, while in contract, disposition is immaterial and all that is required is fulfillment of contractual terms.³⁵⁶

Hegel contends that marriage is essentially monogamous because it is the individuals that consent to this relationship. Williams' interpretation of Hegel is that only this context can ensure equal right on women. According to Williams, Hegel recognizes Spirit both in men and women.³⁵⁷ The weakness in Hegel's analysis of the family is the stereotypes which he characterizes the two sexes; for example, the male is a mind with public orientation and so objective while the woman is on the level of feeling and subjective and mainly confined to family affairs.³⁵⁸ Hegel's analysis overlooks the complementary roles each sex plays both in the family and the public life. To confine one to one role or other is to undermine the capability of each and this retards the development not only of the women but also of a nation. On the other

³⁵⁵ Ibid., §163.

³⁵⁶ Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 220.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 220.

³⁵⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §166.

hand, the complementary roles between the two sexes have only come to light in the recent times and may not have been an issue in Hegel's time.

II. The Civil Society

The second substantial freedom is concretized in the civil society. In Hegel's view a person is one of principles in the civil society. The civil society's goal is securing the individual freedom in order to meet one's needs and attain one's ends. The civil society is characterized as the system of needs that requires others for its realization. Here the concrete person stands in a universal relationship.³⁵⁹ Although one is among others, a person is also a subject by virtue of pursuing private ends. Consequently, willing one's ends implies willing other people's ends. In this willing of universal ends, the individual transcends individual goals characteristic of the system of needs, and identifies with the goals of the society. According to Hegel, it is only in civil society that the rights of all, happiness, and livelihood are realized.³⁶⁰ At this point, Hegel holds an idealized concept of the civil society. In actual life, there is deprivation of happiness, livelihood and freedom in some members in the society. Therefore, the freedom he envisions is only possible to some and not others.

In the Hegelian ethics, a central value is the incorporation of individual needs in the ethical system. Any ethical formulation that takes a human being seriously must incorporate the person's needs within that system. Otherwise, ethical principles fall outside the actual person. It is in this respect that Hegel's theory goes beyond Kantian moral theory. The latter's principles advocate duty 'for its own sake' and not for the relation of moral law to the agent as a creature of needs.

³⁵⁹*Ibid.*, §182.

³⁶⁰*Ibid.*, §184.

Pelczynski advances this point by characterizing Hegel's theory of civil society as positive sense of individualism in modern times.³⁶¹ His understanding of Hegel's idea of civil society is that it is a recognition of rights and interests peculiar and private to individuals. It represents recognition of individual social and political views that need to be respected even if they differ from prevailing values and beliefs. The significance of such recognition is that ethical principles depend on rational subjective conviction rather than being understood as alien and militating against individual interests. According to Pelczynski, ethical principles must be judged as directly related to the individual ends in such a way that these ends depend on these principles for their realization.³⁶²

Civil authority is for ensuring administration of justice by protecting individual property and persons' lives so that their well-being and livelihood are attained. Consequently, civil administration has the responsibility to ensure security of everyone in the civil society.³⁶³ Hegel puts the sphere of economy with the parties and institutions concerned, but also maintains that the public authority must be involved in regulating the general practice of economy.³⁶⁴

Although the civil society is meant to enable the individual meet their needs and achieve one's goals, corporations can be so caught up in the maze of profit making that human values are inverted. As a result, the same human being for the good of whom the creation of civil society is supposed to serve falls by the wayside. More on this issue will be treated in the next chapter.

³⁶¹Z. A. Pelczynski, *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 60.

³⁶²Ibid., 8.

³⁶³Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §230 – 233.

³⁶⁴Ibid., §235.

III. The State

In Hegel's idea of ethical life, civil society realizes itself in the state, and the two are not reducible to each other. Civil society is a system of needs, characterized by interdependence among its members to realize their substantive ends. In the state, individuals transcend their own needs and pass on to goals of the society at large. Hegel characterizes the state as the objectification of the mind of its citizens. The state is the realization of substantive freedom. In Williams' reading of Hegel, the mind of the citizens is objectified through the rational laws and institutions. What makes the state concrete is that, unlike the family, it is particularized. I take this to mean that the state is understood as a will and so as a subject.³⁶⁵

The state is concrete because its laws and institutions are actual; that is, they are operative in the lives of the citizens who live under these laws and institutions. The state is also a subject, and its subjectivity is infinite because it relates to itself. It incorporates the individual freedom through its constitution and institutions, so that the rule is not external to the citizens, it is this incorporation that renders its laws and institutions valid.³⁶⁶ In the state, the power of ethical order is actualized and what the state enforces is understood as willed by the individual. Through the state, freedom is raised to a higher sphere from those realized in the family and civil society.

Hegel's view is that the state is the realization of the ethical 'Idea.' For Hegel, Idea is a self-manifestation of concept of a people in its concreteness; that is, the state's realization of freedom, which is the goal of the ethical subject as an individual and as a society. Hegel's conception of the state is that it is an ethical mind, a will reflecting on itself, which is the same as consciousness of a people in its immediacy of custom, mediated in self-consciousness as

³⁶⁵ Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 144.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

individuals and as citizens with the state as their essence. In Hegel's thought, the individual and state are identical.³⁶⁷

According to Hegel, the state is rational, in as much as it is the actuality of the substantial will of each individual self-consciousness. As such, priority of the state over individual is crucial in Hegel's ethics, and it is the end wherein freedom is realized as supreme right. Consequently, to be a member of the state is a necessity not an option.³⁶⁸

Hegel maintains that the state must not be confused with the civil society, whose objective is to protect the individual freedom and property. If the state would be so construed, individual freedom and interests would become the ultimate reason for their membership in the state, so that to be a member of state becomes optional. For Hegel, the state is an objectification of the mind, and only by virtue of being its member is the individual able to lead an ethical life. Consequently, to be united to the state is the truth and ultimate goal of the individual.³⁶⁹

Hegel's identification of the individual with the state raises certain issues. While to be a member of a state is necessary, it is doubtful that this is the ultimate goal. Although the state has a role in what the individual is and can become, it is not the case that one wishes to identify with state in its entirety. For example, there are occasions the state makes unwise decisions with regard to the citizens and foreign policies and the individuals have to differ with the state.

Hegel's position that the state is an eternal and necessary way of being of the 'mind.' is crucial. His concern is not a historical account of how the state arises, which he holds to be the sphere of historians. For Hegel, the state is a philosophical rather than a historical issue. In this distinction, Hegel implies that what is important is not origin but rationality. The latter is state

³⁶⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §257.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., §258.

sanctioned by its being guided by rational laws. This is, the spirit that unites the members of the state. Hegel criticizes Rousseau for his characterization of the state as a contract, which for Hegel is a union of arbitrary wills. On the contrary, unity that is characteristic of the state is rational, and hence, a spiritual union. According to Hegel, Rousseau's logical justification of a state destroys its divine element and authority. For this reason, the logic behind Rousseau's theory of contract could not realize the idea of the state but end only with terror.³⁷⁰ Hegel's argument on the state reflects his characterization of the contract as a moment, and not the Idea of a state. In his view, since a contract is so arbitrary, nothing ensures its endurance. In this respect, Hegel's theory of state transcends that of Fichte. His conception of the relation of the individual and society is captured in the following text:

Confronted with claims for individual will, we must remember the fundamental conception that the objective will is rationality implicit or in conception, whether it be recognized or not by individuals, whether their whims be deliberately for it or not. We must remember that its opposite, i.e., knowing and willing or subjective freedom (the only thing contained in the principle of individual will) comprises only one moment, and therefore a one-sided moment of the idea of the rational will, i.e., of the will which is rational solely because what it is implicitly, that it also is explicitly.³⁷¹

The above text expresses the most recurring theme in Hegel's ethical thought, the relation between individual and society. For Hegel, the society is the whole of which the individual is a part. In various instances, Hegel indicates that the individual is an important moment of the society. In the above text however, the place of individual is undermined in such a way that the individual is accidental as opposed to being necessary to the society.

The weakness of this view is that any time a nation loses sight of the importance of the individual, the result is repression and abuse of the human person. Nations have committed atrocities against members of the state and outside of the state, including colonization and

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

slavery, in the name of the nation. In his idealization of the state, Hegel seems to overlook the relative nature of ‘rationality’ of state. There are times when individuals or communities are better off without a state. For example, the introduction of states has resulted in civil wars, loss of millions of lives and displacement of people due to arbitrary demarcation of the of the globe. As a result, the crises of refugees is a global problem. In principle, the state is rational as a context of self-realization of individuals and as a nation. However, absolute rationality of state is questionable. For the victims of civil wars and displacement and all suffering that comes with that, state is not rational as Hegel claims.

According to Hegel, the state is immediately actual in its autonomy as a self-subsistent organism through its constitution and laws, international laws in its relation to other nations, and finally, as a mind that gives shape to itself in world history.³⁷² For Hegel, the state is an actualization of concrete freedom; freedom in which, rights are recognized and individuals realize their potential. Further, citizens transcend personal interests and concern themselves with the universal goal of freedom, recognizing this as they pursue their personal ends. It follows that society cannot realize its goals except through particular knowing and willing. Conversely, the individual cannot live and pursue one’s interests except in pursuing universal goals. In Seidel’s terms, the goals of the state are in the individual and the individuals in the state.³⁷³ Hegel argues that the superiority of the modern state lies in its principle that has a place for subjectivity to realize itself and at the same time emphasize substantive unity.³⁷⁴ In the Hegelian theory of state, the individual does not have to abandon one’s subjective pursuits; however, they must be incorporated in the overall good.

³⁷² Ibid., §259.

³⁷³ Seidel, 84.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., §260.

E

Recognition in Hegelian Ethics

The concept of ‘recognition’ is the linchpin of Hegel’s philosophical system. The notion is not peculiar to Hegel, but has its roots in Fichte’s practical philosophy. The latter makes recognition the condition of individual awareness of freedom. Hegel appropriates the notion of recognition from Fichte. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Fichte argues that a person can be a human being only in a human community. In Fichte’s doctrine of ‘Natural Right,’ the notion of recognition plays a vital role. He claims that consciousness of one’s freedom presupposes a summons, a challenge, addressed to a person by another. This other for Fichte must be a rational being, for only a rational being understands freedom and is intelligent to know that the other understands this challenge. Thus, the source of the summons treats the other as a human being, and demands that the other exercise free efficacy. Consequently, self-consciousness of who one is, is possible only through another self-consciousness. The role of recognition in Fichte’s philosophy is:

Only free interaction by means of concepts and in accordance with concepts, only giving and receiving of knowledge is a distinctive character of humanity by virtue of which alone each person undeniably confirms himself as a human being.³⁷⁵

The force of Fichte’s claim lies in his argument that in the reality of recognition is the basis for the possibility not only of practical life in human community, but also knowledge, both of which are hallmarks of human existence.

Allen Wood denies the validity of a demand or summons as a precondition of self-awareness. He argues that if self-awareness requires a pre-existing object, adding another object

³⁷⁵ Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, §3, sec 40.

– a summons, would not help. Instead, adding another object is characteristic of Kant’s problem in the first antinomy and infinite regress of causes³⁷⁶

I disagree with Wood because Fichte’s point is not meant to solve the problem of infinite regress of causes; rather, his argument is that freedom is an issue only in community for it is here that humans interact with one another. Freedom is to order one’s life so that others can exercise the same freedom. Ordering one’s action is a demand made by human beings of one another. Fichte’s point is that one must know the other to be capable of self-restraint or of executing what is required; otherwise, it would not be demanded.

What is problematic in Fichte’s account is that it is not clear how the other knows that the subject is free. It seems from Fichte that the other knows the self to be free prior to the self’s knowledge of itself. How the other arrives at the understanding of freedom is not clear. Fichte’s argument is that awareness of the other person’s demand on one’s conduct is a precondition of acting according to that demand. Fichte’s claim is that one’s awareness of who one is comes to the fore through the demands others make on the self. In Fichte’s terms, we become a self only by being summoned to act freely.³⁷⁷

Wood’s interpretation of Fichte is that recognition requires that free beings differentiate themselves from one another by allocating a sphere of free activity to themselves and recognizing the same for others. With this comes the property contract, through which, spheres for individual freedom are recognized.³⁷⁸ Following Fichte, Wood argues that self-consciousness requires awareness of another’s demand on self to act in a specific manner. Recognition requires the subject to respect the free sphere of activity belonging to someone else. Mutual recognition

³⁷⁶ Allen W. Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 79.

³⁷⁷ Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, §3, sec. 39.

then is a relation of right in which one's freedom is limited according to the concept of the other as a free being.³⁷⁹ Wood's interpretation is that Fichte's argument emphasizes being consistent with oneself as the necessary reason for respecting another's sphere of free efficacy. Wood criticizes logical consistency as a reason for respecting another's property. According to Wood, that the subject ought to respect the other's right does not imply a lack of reason(s) to violate those rights should one think it necessary. The inadequacy of a logical justification of respecting other's rights causes Fichte to argue from the perspective of social structures to enforce personal rights.³⁸⁰

Williams' reading of Hegel is that the motif of 'recognition' underlies the whole of the latter's system. It is the genesis of the concept of actuality of Spirit, with intersubjectivity as its essential character. Hegel's underlying premise is that self-consciousness is by mediation.³⁸¹ The idea in Hegel's principle of mediation is that self-consciousness is possible only through encountering another subject in 'opposition' to self. The significance of opposition is that the self asserts oneself as other and therefore as free.

According to Williams, conscience is the ultimate judge, which in Hegelian ethics is seen to resolve conflict of duties and arrive at what is right in a given situation. In Williams' reading of Hegel, recognition gauges the dualism between nature and subject inherent in Kant's moral theory. For Williams, Hegel's view of mutual recognition reinterprets the ethical as second nature, and conscience as the power for realizing the good, and what obligation entails in concrete situation.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 80.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 81.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 73.

³⁸² Ibid., 202.

Wood's view is that the significance of the recognition consists in Hegel's utilizing it to establish the claim that every person has rights that must be respected by everyone. Hegel argues from the idea of "recognition," a notion that implies a mutual awareness among persons. Hegel's premise concerns the role of recognition in self-consciousness.³⁸³

Hegel's orchestrates "recognition" and its role in realization of self-consciousness in his "Master/Slave" dialectic. His claim is that self-consciousness exists only if it is acknowledged by another.³⁸⁴ This other must be another self-consciousness, as opposed to an object; for only another self can acknowledge a self.

Recognition in Hegel's dialectic has the meaning of seeing oneself in another. He uses the concept of self-consciousness 'coming out of itself,' to indicate this self-recognition in another. According to Hegel, this moment implies that in one sense self-consciousness has lost itself to another for it only sees itself in another. On the other hand, it has displaced the other because instead of seeing the other it only sees itself.³⁸⁵

The idea of seeing oneself in the other is key in this argument. It implies that the self cannot realize itself without the other. There is a relation of dependence such that the self identifies with the other. However, the self must in recognition see the other and oneself. Therefore, one must be cautious because to see the other as other is to recognize the other's freedom. Hegel uses the terms 'kept back within itself' to indicate the respect with which one must approach the other.³⁸⁶

Hans-Georg Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel is that the self does not lose oneself in a manner characteristic of obsession with power and honor; were this the case, the self would only

³⁸³ Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 77.

³⁸⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §178.

see itself and not the other. He argues that although the self must cancel the other in self-assertion, it must do so with caution out of respect for the other with whom the self identifies as necessary for self-consciousness.³⁸⁷ In this account, Hegel distinguishes the consciousness as desire of object from consciousness as desire for recognition by another self. In the former, the self seeks to utilize the object for its ends. On the contrary, the other self cannot be so utilized because that self is independent.³⁸⁸

Hegel argues that the significance of the action in both self-consciousnesses is that action is directed against the other as well as against the self.³⁸⁹ Hegel's point here cannot be overemphasized. What one does affects not only the other but also the self; to do away with the other is self-destruction. In the struggle between 'master and slave' the death of one is the end of the truth of self-certainty that depends on recognition.³⁹⁰ Hegel's solution is that recognition must be mutual in its essence. For Hegel, action by one party is meaningless because recognition can take place only when the two are recognizing. In Hegel's terms, "Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other; and only does it, if the other does the same."³⁹¹ In 'Hegel's dialectic, he establishes how the consciousness develops through various phases. It appears that how both the master and the slave understand this relationship is of ultimate importance. In this the master ends in being the slave of the slave as he depends on the slave's labor for his enjoyment while the slave becomes the master of the master through his work.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., §179.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., §184.

³⁸⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutic Studies*, trans. Christopher Smith (New Haven, NC: Yale University Press, 1976), 63.

³⁸⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §182.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., §183.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., §188.

³⁹¹ Ibid., §182.

In Hegel's analysis, although the master depends on the servant for the things he enjoys, the servant is still not free. To be truly free means to be able to determine one's destiny through the works of one's labor. If one cannot, the individual is not free even in the sense of abstract right. As it is, freedom is still a concept that has not been actualized. What is essential is the servant not only have the concept of his freedom but realize it. As will be shown in the next chapter, alienation from the product of one's labor become an important issue in Marx's critique of Hegel.

Hegel and Kant can be compared in their approaches to a theory of ethics/morality. For Kant, good will must be presupposed for an action to have a moral value. This is because the subject must act on the basis of the rightness of the action, as opposed to other motives, such as happiness or any other good, for this requires omniscience. Therefore, disposition of the subject is crucial for Kant. Walsh argues that Kant's moral theory cannot for this reason be characterized as one-sided or subjective. According to Walsh, Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* points to the social dimension of his ethical system; in other words, Kant's emphasis on subjectivity does not detract from social dimension of morality.³⁹² Despite the emphasis on the subjective side, it is not the case that any action passes for morality, as Hegel seems to conclude. Once an action is performed, it assumes a social reality and becomes a social concern. For this reason, the agent cannot be the only judge of the rightness of moral actions.

The difference between Kant and Hegel on this point is that Hegel limits motive and decision only to responsibility and not for the rightness of action. According to Hegel, the complexity of the external world towards which the moral action is directed means that both

³⁹² Walsh, 12.

internal and external aspects of action matter. For this reason, the only act that qualifies for morality is one that has both subjective and social agreement with what is normative.

Although Hegel makes a valid point about the communal aspect of the ethical, that may not solve all ethical/moral. What is socially accepted as norms may still be wrong and conflict with the dignity of a human being. In this case, individuals might differ with what is socially justified. Hegel seems to think that dissent is limited to communities in which ‘ethical life’ has not taken shape and so morality is more extraordinary behavior than a way of life.

Walsh points out that Hegel’s ethics is not about moral issues; rather, it is a description of modern social life in its institutions of family, civil society, and the state, the background from which the moral judgments must be made. For this reason, the scope of Hegel’s ethical theory is uniquely broad, and his aim well beyond improving Kant’s theory to a treatment of broader issues encompassing what he conceives as ‘ethical life.’³⁹³ Hegel’s ethical theory lays emphasis on social than personal aspect. For Hegel, the social aspect of moral action is more important than the rightness of motive.

Hegel recognizes the right of ‘conscience’ and considers it to be the “the highest subjective right.” This right, however, is formal. As a result, the right of the objective over the subjective takes priority. The prerogative of objective over subjective is captured in Hegel’s thought that “true conscience is a disposition to will what is absolutely good”³⁹⁴ By the same token, he argues that it does not follow that any act arising from conscience is right; rather, what is rational must not be exclusively individual but also in terms of laws and principles. In this, Hegel and Kant agree that the universal is the essence of morally/ethically right.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §137.

Walsh draws an important difference between the universality of scientific rules and the morals, arguing that the former are used without individual verification on the basis that they are considered universally valid. In this case, one can apply the scientific method without being accused of preferring foreign authority to free judgment. On the contrary, in the case of morals, one must personally justify and defend one's moral principles and cannot quote authority of any kind to explain or justify one's actions.³⁹⁵ The difference between the two realms pertains to involvement of the will in the latter but not in the former. Walsh insists that morality is not about skill and thinking, but has more to do with judgment and decision, and acting according to principles that one can appeal to and defend. Ultimately, Hegel seems to downplay the significance of moral subjectivity. For Walsh, morality involves a more personal commitment than Hegel seems to admit.³⁹⁶ According to Walsh, morality is both a personal concern and a social institution, such that not just anything that can pass for morality. Walsh maintains that even though there is individual expression, there is a limit to that innovation. Morality, like the law, is concerned with ordering individual freedom according to reason for the common good.

The weight of Walsh's argument lies in his position that social life is possible only if the members of society go beyond what the law requires. It takes 'personal commitment' to cultivate elements such as respect, honesty and personal integrity. Without these, human community would be impossible. Walsh's argument is essential and can be better appreciated if morality is understood from the perspective of actual relationships among persons. Morality would not arise were a human being solitary. Consequently, the shape of relationship cannot be a matter of individual whims for then it would not be relational. While the right of conscience is primary in morality, it is not individualistic. Conscience is not formed in isolation from the human

³⁹⁵ Walsh, 15.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

community. One is born and raised in a community and what one considers wrong or right is already imbued in the person through socialization. Ordinarily, human beings do not explain away their actions in terms of individual conscience. Right and wrong are not ideas in which one is free to think anything, but refer to judgments of reality and are not in isolation from human relationship. Consequently, conscience is both individual and communal. Were it not, laws would be impossible, for each individual would be isolated within one's own conscience.

The force of Hegel's ethical theory is the objective of the next chapter. In view of the foregoing discussion on Hegel's ethical thought a word is in order. Hegel's theory aims at realization of freedom. He indicates that freedom is realizable only in the context of ethical life. The question is whether he has succeeded in doing so. My answer is positive but with qualifications. Despite certain issues that the Hegelian ethics poses, it may be argued that he makes his case on the conditions for the possibility of human freedom. Hegel's system of ethical life is meant to provide this context.

The centerpiece of Kant's moral theory is the dignity of human person who is an end in itself. Owing to freedom of rational nature, Kant proposes that the moral law has its object the realization of highest good; that is morality and happiness. For these goals to be realized, something more than morality is required, a certain organization of society. As Pelczynski has argued, Hegel's ethical life comprises the world of laws and human relations and is the soil in which abstract right and morality develop. Without it, right and morality remain only abstract.³⁹⁷ What this proposition indicates is that the moral human being that Kant wishes to protect with 'categorical imperative' requires a certain arrangement in the society for this to be possible. Hegel's system of ethical life endeavors to provide this context. On the other hand, one wonders

³⁹⁷ Pelczynski, 67.

whether the same freedom that Hegel's state engenders does not turn to be self-destruction of the society. For instance, freedom in the civil society results in individual's freedom to expand their profit-making to the point of losing the very value of the human person they are meant to serve. Further, Hegel emphasizes that freedom culminates in political freedom. However, there are other types of freedom without which human life can be empty and meaningless. For example, there is a delicate balance between being free as a nation and being free as a person to lead a meaningful life. In the modern society the problem is not 'freedom' but 'freedoms'. Individuals can be free citizens such that they can pursue almost anything but are entangled in their psychological and social problems in such a way that they really are not free and political freedom does not enable them to lead a quality life.

Finally, the question to be answered is whether Kant's moral theory can be transcended by Hegelian 'ethical life.' This is not a question of 'Yes' and 'No' answer. One of issues that is yet to be addressed is Hegel's position on freedom. In his *Early Theological Writings*, the Hegel introduces the notion of 'life.' In his interpretation of Hegel, T.M. Knox argues that the whole and absolute is *life* it is the 'whole.' I take this to imply that life as such is opposing terms are reconciled. In Knox's terms, law and inclination, particular and universal are unified.³⁹⁸ From this analysis, it can be deduced that for Hegel, life and freedom is one and the same, for freedom is the 'true' and the 'whole.'

One of the points to be noted is that Hegel relates freedom with private property. Private property is objectification of freedom. One of unresolved issues is that with the problem of poverty in the society it means that the poor cannot participate in life or in freedom. The issue is crucial because Hegel's criticism against Kantian morality is that it has no content. It follows that

³⁹⁸ Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*. T. M. Knox, trans. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 215.

validity of Hegel's arguments is based on the extent to which human dignity that is the centerpiece of Kant's moral theory is realizable in Hegelian notion of *ethical life*.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S ETHICAL THEORY

The objective of this chapter is to provide a critical evaluation of Hegel's ethical theory. The chapter advances the argument concerning the importance of Hegel's development of Kant's moral theory and limitations in Hegel's ethical theory. With regard to the above objective the chapter comprises three sections: Section A considers the role that the motif of 'synthesis' plays in Hegel's development of Kantian moral theory. It is argued that Hegel's emphasis on 'the community and the individual' as constituting the whole of the ethical enables Hegel's theory to transcend some of Kant's moral principles by virtue of situating the subject as part of what forms 'the whole'. This section brings to the fore the significance of Hegel's conciliatory position towards, (1) individual and community; (2). morality and nature; (3).the human and the divine.

Section B examines limitations in Hegel's ethical principles. First I argue that although Hegel's conciliatory position addresses the problem of dualism in Kant's moral theory, this synthesis leaves unresolved problems. I advance the argument that Hegel does not adequately establish how unity of individual and community can be effected in the social and economic world; for instance, despite Hegel's argument that the particular and universal good are inseparable in action, poverty remains an unresolved problem in civil society. Further, it is not clear how unity of human and divine is effected without reducing one to the other. Second, unresolved issues arise from Hegel's position on the state as 'rational'. With regard to this point,

I take up prevailing polemics concerning Hegel's position on the rationality of state. I establish that the rationality of the state cannot be properly understood without qualifying conditions that Hegel underrates.

Section C highlights Hegel's overall contribution to modern ethical reflection. First, I take up Marx's challenge concerning the role of philosophy in changing the world. I argue for the relevance of Hegel's ethical principles in the contemporary society from global perspective. The question to be answered is what 'recognition' could mean in contemporary society; that is, how Hegel's notion of recognition can respond to the problem of alienation in contemporary society. I conclude the chapter with two points: first I argue that the idea reciprocity is indispensable aspect of recognition. The objective of the final section is to clarify Hegel's idea of recognition in a way that undercuts totalitarian charges against his view of the society as 'the whole'. Second, I argue that for recognition to realize the vision that Hegel projects for the ethical society, his principles need Kant's vision of the dignity of the human person.

A

Synthesis in Hegel's Ethical Principles

One of the distinguishing characteristics in Hegel's ethical thought is the distinction between '*morality*' and 'ethical life'. This distinction can be construed in terms of individual and community good. Hegel's position on the difference between the two forms the basis of his criticism against Kant's moral theory. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel contends that 'morality' and 'ethics' are different in that morality is one of the stages of development towards ethical life, which he characterizes as the Idea. For Hegel, ethical Idea is realized in the state. He contends that Kant's ethical principles are limited to morality and this makes ethical life impossible and

invalidates it.³⁹⁹ As already indicated in the last chapter, Hegel's ethical formulation is a critique of Kant's moral principles. In his philosophical system, Hegel is a synthesizer. He takes opposed views and effects a single 'whole' understood as the beginning, the process of development, and the goal of the ethical idea. In his criticism against the Kantian principles, Hegel both appropriates and develops the Kantian moral principles and in some instances, transcends them. As indicated above, Hegel's conciliatory position revolves around three relations: individual and community good, relation of morality and nature, and the relation of human and divine, individual and community. This section examines how Hegel reconciles these relations.

Hegel alleges that morality is subjective in that it emphasizes the importance of 'motive' as what counts in morally worth actions. The problem Hegel finds with this principle is that if the motive determines the moral value in an action the subject can universalize any motive. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Kant does not believe that any motive can work as a moral motive because the canon is that the principle of morality is both within and without. According to this criteria, the principle is to treat the other human being as an end in itself; hence, the other becomes the objective principle while the agent is the subjective principle. However, the agent is still the judge of one's own intention to treat the other as an end in itself. Hegel holds that the subject is one side of what makes the ethical 'whole' the community is the other aspect. For Hegel, different opposing aspects of the ethical whole must be reconciled for morality to be actual. In *Phenomenology*, Hegel's position is indicated in his argument on what is really problematic in morality:

It may seem that, since, in the actual case, duty in general is sundered into an antithesis of individuality and universality, the duty whose content is the universal itself directly contains the nature of pure duty, and form and content are thus in accord. It might seem then that action for the general good is to be preferred to action for the good of individual....⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §33

In the above text, Hegel is trying to address the dualism in morality where in, pure duty means acting for the sake of universal good as opposed to the personal interest or individual good. In Hegel's view however, the two are not separable. What Hegel is arguing here is that universality of action is actually what is existent in the laws and right. The latter are valid irrespective of the individual knowing and interest. It follows that separation of universal from particular good militates against the already existing universality of morality owing to its emphasis on knowledge and conviction of the individual. Hegel insists that the separation between the universal from individual aspect has two consequences: first, consciousness takes itself to be free to fulfill or not the universal good. Second, since universality is not determinate, what one does for oneself is raised to universal status so that any action can be said to be one's duty to others. Hegel calls this a 'self-assured spirit' with its truth of duty within itself.⁴⁰¹

Hegel's point in this argument is that if Kant's moral principles are upheld, ethical life would be impossible. This is because one and the same action is both particular and universal; that is, the action is individual willing and doing. On the other hand, the action is universal because once performed, it enters into the objective world and divides into more purposes than the subject intends. Hegel contends that morality is inadequate and the solution is to move to ethical life. For Hegel, reason is realized in customs, institutions and laws of the community. This is different from morality, which he characterized as based on individual autonomy and conviction. Ethical life on the other hand, is unreflective and is in accordance with the community's way of life.

Philip Kain's interpretation of Hegel is that morality of ethical life is not 'what ought to be' but what 'is'. According to this line of thinking, ethical life is the way of life of ethical

⁴⁰⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §645.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., §646

community such that the objective of ethical order is already being practiced by the members of the community.⁴⁰² Consequently, both subjective and objective, universal and particular coincide in the agent.

In Kant's moral theory, duty must be performed for duty's sake and not for any other motive such as happiness or consequence the action might bring. However, Hegel's ethical life considers the satisfaction of the agent important if the willing of action is to be of any value. He maintains that since the action is willed and fulfilled by the individual, there has to be self-interest in the action because at the same time that the subject fulfills the universal ends, the individual meet one's own needs such as material and self-fulfillment. Consequently, if the action is judged as not moral because it is imbued with self-interest, the ethical is not possible for every action has individuality in it.

In effect, synthesis of pure duty and action does away with the dualism between pure duty and the concrete action. In the Hegelian system, a synthesis is achieved when the opposing poles are reconciled in reason. What is at stake in Kant's formulation of pure duty is communal good. Hegel agrees with Kant on the truth as universal but criticizes the separation of universal and particular aspects of action because this results in abstraction. Hegel's claim is that there is no action that is exclusively for self. He denies that an action can be wholly performed for personal ends with the universal end being only a means to personal ends.⁴⁰³ Based on this argument Hegel advances the argument that ethical life embraces the family, the civil society, and the state. In his thought, these elements point to the concrete context within which the human

⁴⁰² Philip J. Kain 'Hegel's Critique of Kant's Practical Reason' in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 28, No 3, (September 1998), 367 – 368.

⁴⁰³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §124.

agent realizes the good, which for Hegel is freedom understood here as the essence of right and the goal both of individual and society.⁴⁰⁴

The significance of this argument the emphasis that subjective and objective ends as not mutually exclusive and that the subjective aspect of the action as inevitable for it is always embedded in the very personal satisfaction of a given accomplishment. Consequently, to insist that the presence of subjective satisfaction annuls the good of the action is to engage in abstraction. Allan Speight's understanding is that one does not have to give up personal end in order to fulfill a duty; rather, one's desires and interests are identical with ethical duties.⁴⁰⁵

The notion of 'the whole' in Hegelian philosophical system has been explicated in the last chapter. In ethical life, the whole, according to Speight mediates between reason and desire; therefore, the whole of duty is not a mortification of what one values but a part of what is important for self who belongs to institutions of family, the corporations in the civil society, and the state. The principle of the 'whole' has the significance of effecting the continuity of desire and reason. Consequently, in fulfilling one's duty, the individual realizes oneself.⁴⁰⁶

Speight argues that both Kant and Hegel agree that there are rational ends that are not limited to self-restraint; instead, they also constitute actions concerned with happiness of self and others and these too are duties. Accordingly, reason and desires are not opposed entities of the agent but they are continuous with each other such that natural desire for human goods such as economic and political order are pertinent to proper understanding of the agent's action.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., §129.

⁴⁰⁵ Speight C. Allen, 'The Metaphysics of Morals and Hegel's Critique of Kantian Ethics' in *History of Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2. (Fall, 1991), 392.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

Speight contends that although in relation to natural desires the agent is free to act on them, desire-satisfaction requires that one pursue the ends related to them as objects of rational agency. I take Speight's argument to imply that even in satisfaction of desires, there is a distinction between brutes' and rational satisfaction. In rational satisfaction one is not at the mercy of desires but can freely direct them according to principles. According to Speight, Hegel's project aims to demonstrate how free a agent can manifest rationality and freedom in pursuing those ends. That means, the agent's commitment to institutions of family or the corporations is construed not as mere desires but ends of autonomous agent. As a result, to participate in the institutions of ethical life is to acknowledge one's free agency⁴⁰⁷ Speight's interpretation reflects Hegel's view that in 'property' which is a means to meet human needs, the emphasis is not satisfaction of desire but manifestation of freedom. Hegel argues that no action can escape the judgment of being selfish, such as desire for happiness, ambition for fame etc. For this reason, duty for duty's sake is 'unreality' and it becomes a reality in the individuality whereby, the action is charged with particularity.⁴⁰⁸

In Hegel's notion of ethical life, duty and right coincide. "Man has rights so far as he has duties and duties as far as he has rights".⁴⁰⁹ In this proposition, Hegel implies that since rights have to do with individual self-satisfaction, it follows that these rights are possible only if there are duties. The essence of morality is that the welfare of others depends on those rights; therefore, it becomes a duty to further that welfare through these rights.⁴¹⁰

The difference between Kant and Hegel on this issue is that although Kant indicates the difference between duties that can be coerced (legal duties) and those that cannot, (duties of

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 394.

⁴⁰⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §665.

⁴⁰⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §155.

virtue) he does not establish how the two are reconciled in the human agent. Consequently, there is tension between perfect and imperfect duties in his moral theory.

Both Kant and Hegel agree that there is distinction between the rights that can be defended because they are ethical and virtue, which is not coercible. Accordingly, rights and duties are separable but they coincide as justifying reasons an agent may have for an action in a given situation; therefore, the agent can perform a judicial act out of moral reasons.⁴¹¹ The point is that although rights and virtue are separable reason justifies both as principles for actions.

Speight's interpretation of Hegel is in agreement with Z.A Pelczynski's view that the civil society is characterized by duties that transcend culture or convention; these duties are objective laws. The role of these laws is to guard against breach of both the principle of right and morality; they are principles that every person in the modern society accepts and fulfills even though one may have to make sacrifice in their preference.⁴¹²

Pelczynski's point here contains the kernel in Hegel's idea of 'the whole'. There is a way in which the laws of the state can be seen as militating against the individual rights simply because the state is concerned with the well-being and interests of the all as opposed to individual good. Consequently, the state may sometimes override individual interests for the common good. Pelczynski's point situates duty within the framework of the person who is the object and basis of duty as opposed to duty for its own sake. While Kant in the idea of universal good has as the underlying motif as the good of the agent, he does not adequately defend the position of how duty is related to the individual; rather, he insists on the opposition between duty to individual and duty to the community; hence, the answer to the question, why should one be

⁴¹⁰ Speight, 'The Metaphysics of Morals and Hegel's Critique of Kant,' *Journal of Philosophical Quarterly*, 391.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 381

⁴¹² Z.A. Pelczynski, 7.

moral is answered differently by Kant and Hegel. For Kant, duty must be performed because it is the right thing to do. Although Kant indicates that the object of moral principles is the human being, he does not establish the concrete implications of this principle. According to Hegel, there are human reasons as to why the individual should be ethical. He argues that it is important for the individual to pursue moral goals because one's self-realization depends on their pursuit. The latter view is explicit in *Philosophy of Right* :

The absence of property contains in itself just as little contradiction as non-existence of this or that nation, family etc. or death of the whole human race. But if it is already established on other grounds and presupposed that property and human life are to exist and be respected, then indeed it is a contradiction to commit theft or murder; a contradiction must be a contradiction of something, i.e., of some content presupposed from the start as a fixed principle.⁴¹³

In Hegel's view, moral principles presuppose a certain context of the moral agent and without such a context these principles would be meaningless. In his criticism against morality, Hegel insists that human beings can only attain their highest potential in a well-structured society, a society in which rights and duties are related in reciprocal fashion. Conceptually, duty and personal interest are mutually inclusive; the important issues pertain to application of this concept to reality. As is indicated in section two of this study, universal and individual good are not as easily reconcilable as Hegel envisions. While the two aspects cannot be separated, they can be distinguished. Hegel's limitation is to ignore the distinction by emphasizing on inseparability. Having explored the first of the relations the study proceeds to examine the relation between morality and nature.

On Morality and Nature:

Concerning the dualism between morality and nature, Hegel argues that the two cannot be separated. In *Phenomenology*, He insists that nature and consciousness are not mutually

⁴¹³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §136.

exclusive for consciousness is related to nature in two senses: On the one hand, nature is for consciousness as an object; that is, nature is the content of consciousness and without it there cannot be consciousness. On the other hand, consciousness is also nature in the sense that a human being is a natural being; hence, sensuousness is consciousness itself. It follows that morality and nature both in generic terms and in the terms of sensuousness must be compatible if morality is to be realized.⁴¹⁴

What is important in the synthesis between morality and nature is that nature is understood as the means through which the subject fulfills duties for duty as purposeful activity is fulfilled in the natural world. The force of Hegel's argument is in his establishing the place of nature as the context of any possible moral activity. In Jean Hyppolite's terms, "nature mediates between pure thought and actual duty" This being the case, any separation of duty and nature makes realization duty impossible. Hegel maintains that the thought of duty and action aimed at fulfillment of duty are both united.

With regard to relation of morality to happiness, Hegel is not the first to forge this connection. His position is a retrieval both of Plato and Aristotle's thought on this issue. Hegel takes up this idea and weaves it into his notion of ethical life. In the *Republic*, the motif of justice underlies the whole dialogue from beginning to the end. In Plato's analysis, justice is justifiable in terms of one's own benefit. He establishes that the more the individual/society moves away from practice of justice, the more unhappy the individual/society becomes. This is illustrated by the example of the unhappiness of a tyrant⁴¹⁵ In contrast, the myth of Er attests to the happiness of the just and the misery of the wicked.⁴¹⁶ While Plato's illustrations cannot be taken literally,

⁴¹⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §622.

⁴¹⁵ Plato, 'Republic' *The Collected Dialogues*, 578.

the point at issue is valid, there are human reason for being ethical for justice rewards the one who practices it.

In ‘Nicomachean’ Ethics, Aristotle argues that it a common experience to connect happiness with virtue. For Aristotle, the ultimate end of all human activities is happiness, “...for it is for the sake of this that we do everything else, and the first principle and cause of good is, we claim, something prized and divine”⁴¹⁷ Although there are certain variations concerning the meaning of happiness, the main point is that happiness and virtuous activity are related.

Hegel’s thought on the relation of morality and happiness transcends Kant’s in that his view establishes the intrinsic relation between and happiness and morality. For Hegel, duty is a rational goal. So construed, happiness is related to morality as it derives from realization of a goal. Kenneth Westphal’s interpretation of Hegel is that any successful moral action necessarily produces happiness, for happiness consists in achieving of ends with moral activity being one of rational ends. Although Hegel holds that the goal of humanity is freedom not happiness, freedom is activity of self-realization, and this constitutes happiness. It follows that in realization of rational ends, freedom is presupposed. The kind of freedom that Hegel has in mind is not unrestricted ego; rather, it is a rational activity in accordance with objective principles. Westphal holds that Kant and Hegel place emphasis on different aspects of duty. Kant’s view is that duty must be performed for its own sake. Accordingly, this kind of duty is incompatible with happiness because it must not consider ends or consequences and must not be motivated by desire.⁴¹⁸ Since for Kant happiness means complete satisfaction of all one’s desires, duty cannot meet this requirement because it is not concerned about desire satisfaction. On the contrary, it

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 619A – B.

⁴¹⁷ Aristotle, ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1102a, 1.

⁴¹⁸ Westphal, *Philosophical Topics*, 140.

must discount all desire as an end of moral activity. Westphal understands Kant to imply that moral motives must discount all ends and be independent of such ends.⁴¹⁹

In contrast, Hegel's emphasis is on the realization of one's duty rather than coincidence of duty and happiness, for the latter is impossible to determine. The difference between Kant and Hegel on this issues is that for Kant, dutiful activity itself is not a source of happiness. On the contrary, Hegel holds that non-moral consciousness can by chance find fulfillment in its activity which is not possible for moral consciousness as its concern is coincidence of virtue and happiness rather than the happiness that moral activity affords.⁴²⁰ In this argument, Hegel's meaning of 'non-moral' consciousness is obscure for it could include a sadist's consciousness. .

One important points to note is that both Hegel and Kant hold that happiness is not a sufficient principle for ethics. Owing to its subjective nature, it is difficult as Kant notes to determine objectively what constitutes happiness. Hegel's strategy of having freedom as the goal and not happiness has two advantages: first, he is able to establish that freedom does not preclude happiness; that means happiness although not the goal of moral actions, it supervenes upon the moral activity. Second, by having the goal of society as freedom, Hegel is able to have both subjective and objective part of actions because full realization of freedom requires recognition by others for society is an indispensable context of freedom.

The Divine and Human:

Another reconciliatory position pertains to relation between human and divine. According to Hegel's interpretation of Kant, the divine is brought to bear on morality in order to make sacred the multiple duties arising from pure duty. He argues that since 'pure duty' splits to

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 141.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

many duties and these duties do not fall under pure duty as Kant has it, it is important that the many duties be subsumed under pure duty. Accordingly, all duties are taken as God's commands.⁴²¹ Hegel insists that for multiple duties to be sacred, they must be rendered so by the actual consciousness. Since they are made sacred by another being, consciousness does not consider these duties holy as they are not holy for it. As a result, actual moral actions are judged as imperfect since they do not fall under pure duty since they are mixed with sensuality. Based on the latter position, Hegel concludes that even the divine cannot be a moral being if Kant's position were upheld. This is because morality is presented as having a negative relation with nature, and the divine has a positive relation to it since there is no struggle with inclination; therefore, the divine cannot be a moral being since his relationship with nature is positive, which Kant rules out as imperfect. Hegel concludes that pure morality that has no relation with reality; therefore, it is unreal and cannot actually exist because thinking, willing, and fulfillment of pure duty would be eliminated.⁴²²

Hegel argues that conscience raises itself above the specific laws and every content of duty; accordingly, it can place whatever content it wishes into its knowing and willing. For Hegel, conscience is the 'cradle' of morality and knows inner voice to be the divine voice. So construed, conscience is the divine itself and its contemplation is contemplation of its own divinity. For Hegel, that conscience's worship is worship of itself.⁴²³

The argument here is that conscience has the divine as the lawgiver. In reality however, this lawgiver is itself; for it is the power that is above any content of the law. For Hegel, this self-

⁴²¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §605.

⁴²² Ibid., §628.

⁴²³ Ibid., §625.

worship is the worship of the community so that the inner knowing of itself proceeds to self-consciousness and religion is self-knowledge of community with respect to its Spirit.⁴²⁴

The reconciliation between the divine and human raises unresolved issue. In this position, it is not clear where the divine begins and ends and where the human. Although the possibility of this unity can be argued for, it is hard to conceptualize what this really means. For Hegel, what the consciousness perceives as the divine is actually its own self. In Hyppolite's terms, "consciousness becomes what it has always considered to be divine".⁴²⁵ The problem with this position is that it is not clear how the two can be so construed without reducing each term to the other. My understanding of Hegel is that the divine is not outside the totality of humanity for human consciousness manifests the historical unfolding of the divine. This interpretation is in agreement with Stephen Houlgate's reading. The latter holds that "Hegel does not believe in a Deistic transcendental "Supreme Being" but in the dynamic divine logic of human life through which human beings are led to full self-understanding".⁴²⁶ Even granting Hegel's position of divine immanent however, the question of God does not only arise from the moral context but also with regard to the efficient cause of all being. Hegel's synthesis does not address the question of origin of all being for even if we grant Hegel's synthesis of immanence and transcendence, problem of origin persists.

Hegel idea of having the divine within the community is plausible, for transcendental idea of God can result into every possible claim on God. As history attests, many evils can be perpetrated in God's name. However, divine immanence can be admitted without reducing the divine transcendence to humanity even the totality of humanity. Hegel makes an unjustified

⁴²⁴Ibid., 656 –7.

⁴²⁵ Hyppolite, 482.

⁴²⁶ Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History, An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy* (New York, NY: Clays Ltd., St Ives Plc, 1991), 39.

conclusion from ‘God with us’ to ‘we are God’. To be sure, the Christian doctrine espouses the notion of Emmanuel (God with us), an idea of divine immanence among human beings. However, this doctrine does not translate into humanity is God, for the divine is understood as breaking into human life not from within humanity but from outside it.

B

Recognition and Ethics

Finally, Hegel’s contribution to contemporary ethical understanding hinges on the notion of ‘recognition.’ He establishes the indispensable role recognition plays in various phases of ethical subject. In abstract right Hegel brings this to the fore in his position on contract, the ethical genesis of intersubjective relations:

Contract presupposes that the parties entering it recognize each other as persons and property owners. It is a relationship at the level of the mind objective, and contains and presupposes from the start the moment of recognition...⁴²⁷

Hegel argues that property, which is embodiment of freedom acquires its validity by being recognized by others. For him, the central character of property is that as an external object it exists for others; that is, it is what it is by its relation to other things in general. Most importantly, property exists as an objectification of the will so that the other for whom property exists is another human being. Based on the idea of property as embodiment of the will, Hegel contends that relation of will to another will through the mediation of property is the basis of freedom. Accordingly, possibility of property is not based on ownership of the object but through the will of another – by recognition.⁴²⁸ The significance of Hegel’s proposition is that not only does it point to his thesis of freedom as the good and the goal of humanity but in it Hegel establishes the condition for its realization as recognition. Hegel appreciates as Fichte does that the condition of

⁴²⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §71.

true freedom is its being recognized by other free beings; as such, freedom is possible only in an organized human community.

Hegel's position on the role of recognition should not be underestimated; he insists that the individual cannot even exist in his own eyes except through recognition. Hegel's master/slave dialectic is a demonstration that even the lord cannot be a master 'in himself' because the precondition is recognition and the latter must be from a free being. According to Hegel, the importance of corporation is that it enables the individual to exist both to oneself and others. Ultimately, even who one aspires to be has its basis on recognition because even though one is free to exercise one's skill, it must be judged by others as contributing to the common good as opposed to exclusively selfish end.⁴²⁹

In Hegel's ethical system, recognition implies 'seeing oneself in another'.⁴³⁰ The idea of 'seeing oneself in another' is indicative of ontological interdependence of self on others for one's self-realization. Ultimately, the emergence of one's self-identity is intrinsically connected to relation with others.

One of the elements of recognition is law. In Hegel's system of ethics the law mediates in the principle of recognition. Hegel holds that through it, one recognizes and is recognized by others. For Hegel, the most important element in the law is language, for it is through the latter that the law assumes objectivity. He characterizes language as the "most worthy medium" of the expression of our ideas.⁴³¹ The argument here is that without language, human thought has no content and cannot be universal; hence, the law acquires universal character through language.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., §207.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., §253 – 4.

⁴³⁰ Idem, *Phenomenology*, §178.

⁴³¹ Idem, *Philosophy of Right*, §78.

On the state level, the language of law becomes a universal language. In Hegel's terms, Spirit exists and expresses itself in language, which is self-consciousness existing for another. In language of law the self and the other coincide and become one self-consciousness.⁴³² Hegel insists that through the language of law the ethical substance knows what is duty for what it is and it is through this that individuals recognize themselves in what is expressed in language of the law. The significance of this notion is that since a particular action is subject to any judgment, the only basis of its rightness is universality and this is made possible by the law, which is rendered universal by language.⁴³³

There are certain difficulties associated with language. As mentioned earlier, the language of law is not immune to interpretive corruption. There is possibility of the law being interpreted to suite the interests of a few rather than to seek justice. Further, law makers may not necessarily seek the good of all and so the law can stipulate just as well as unjust laws; yet by virtue of being laws they acquire the status of universality. For example, in history the poor and women have been victims of unjust laws.

Hegel's claim that through the law one recognizes and is recognized by others may be plausible. However, there is more to a comprehensive understanding of the ethical than language can possibly express. Values, attitudes and beliefs all of which are important elements of approaching another human being cannot be fitted in the language of law.

⁴³² Idem, *Phenomenology*, §652.

⁴³³ Ibid., §653.

C

Limitations in Hegel's Ethical Principles

Having explored the various senses in which Hegel has developed the Kantian moral theory, the discussion proceeds to examine limitations of Hegel's ethical principles. This section focuses on the following issues: 1. the problem of poverty; 2. the problem of Hegel's view on the rationality of the state; 3. relativism in Hegelian ethics.

I. The Problem of Poverty

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's main thesis is that transition from morality to ethical life is necessary. This is because morality holds contradictory and abstract positions that make ethical life untenable. According to Hegel, uniting universal and particular aspects of an action makes realization of the good though by morality possible for the universal and particular good are not mutually exclusive. Hegel contends that one and the same action accomplishes individual as well as universal good. For Hegel, this synthesis is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of action.

The main difficulty in this synthesis is that it appears conceptually possible but it collapses when applied to reality; for example, if universal and particular good are not mutually exclusive, there would not be such a huge rift between the rich and the poor. As Hegel acknowledges, alienation of some members in the society is not only a fact but also an ethical problem that is impossible to ignore. Poverty was an issue in Hegel's time and ours.

I consider the problem of poverty as an important issue for one reason: Hegel's criticism against the Kantian moral principles is that the dualism and contradictions inherent in it makes

ethical life impossible. It follows that if Hegel's criticism is to be valid, ethical life must be seen to resolve the problem of poverty. In Hegel's ethical theory, the goal of ethics is freedom and the latter is the condition for self-realization. However, freedom is only possible with private property and this is Hegel's point in his doctrine of the abstract right. Property for Hegel is objectification of freedom such that through it the individual exists both to oneself and to others by virtue of recognition. Since the poor have no property they also have no freedom and without freedom they cannot attain self-realization as human beings. This would end in the failure of Hegelian ethical principles.

The difficulty the synthesis of universal and particular good presents is that the position overlooks the fact that one and the same action can benefit oneself and hurt other another. What Hegel fails to appreciate is that even though an action cannot be divided, there are aspects of an action that exclusively relate to the other, for instance, when an individual does something there is a possibility of one party benefiting and the other not. It is not the case that the same action necessarily benefits both. For this reason, one act can cause wealth to self and destitution the other. In the following paragraphs, I examine the various ways in which Hegelian scholars have tried to address the fore mentioned issue.

Robert Williams argues that the civil society does not create the situation of poverty for the first time but it worsens the problem by its legitimization of individualism; a principle he describes as 'atomistic'. In the latter, each person is concerned with private interests rather than the common good. The result is that individuals pursue private interests at the expense of the common welfare. In addition, the civil society's desire to produce more results in replacing

human labor with machinery. Accordingly, with the division of labor it becomes impossible for the individuals to make a living with alternative means.⁴³⁴

The creation of civil society in Hegel's ethical theory is meant to be the environment in which the individual and the state can realize their highest potential. What is unfortunate is that what is supposed to bring about self-realization amounts to unjust structure that creates a situation poverty, in Hegel terms, the 'rabble'. Williams points out that not only is the individual deprived of means of survival in the civil society but also recognition with inevitable outcome of alienation⁴³⁵ Williams view of Hegel's civil society is grim:

Hegel's vision of civil society is tragic because the very conditions necessary for the liberation and exercise of individual subjective freedom are at the same time conditions that generate conflict, economic insecurity, unemployment and poverty.⁴³⁶

Williams' analysis puts into question the justification of civil society portrayed as the hallmark of modern society. Individualism in the civil society creates not only material poverty but psychological and social as well; hence, alienation of human person extends to different aspects of a person's life.

Marx reacts to this situation arguing that during decline of wealth and in prosperity the worker is in disadvantage. This is because during the decline of wealth, the worker is paid a minimum wage barely enough to survive. In prosperity, there is competition for workers and this means higher wages. However, higher wages results in tendency to overwork and the worker sacrifices most of his time and freedom to labor. For Marx, great wealth does not translate to better conditions of living for the worker. Marx's overall claim is that "Man's labor confronts him as another's property and the means of existence and activity are increasingly concentrated

⁴³⁴ Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1997), 242.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

in the hand of the capitalist.”⁴³⁷ In Marx’s terms, the worker is reduced to ‘commodity’. The point here is that the worker’s value rise and fluctuate according to supply and demand. Marx’s solution to the problem of poverty is that capitalism should be replaced by communism. The goal of the latter is to abolish private property and this would eliminate class struggle and class society.⁴³⁸

The defect in Marx’s prescription is that it does not seem to take human nature in its entirety. There is no way of telling whether there would be no corruption among the would be classless community. As it is, there would still be ranks in the order of authority that direct state affairs and nothing guarantees there would not be any abuse of power. Further, it is not clear what it is in Marx’s theory that would radically change human beings’ natural tendency to compete. It seems unlikely that nature can be changed by economic change such as one he proposes.

Marx’s vision of equal opportunity for all is plausible. However, this can be gradually achieved not by revolution but through reform within the capitalist society. In our contemporary society, economic life and condition of the workers has changed but it is did not come throught revolution of replacing capitalism with communism. Further, communism has failed in most of the societies that embraced it and this is an indication of its inadequacy.

Hegel acknowledges that poverty is an ethical problem. He points out that it is a result of the civil society itself and it is inevitable given the operations of the latter. He argues that the division of labor means fewer options to earn a living. In addition, due to specialization,

⁴³⁷ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, New York , NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 22

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 223.

overproduction exceeds the consumers. This means lower wages for some and for others no means to earn a living.⁴³⁹

Hegel points out to the dilemma of helping the poor. On the one hand, morality cannot resolve the problem of poverty because it is contingent, i.e., it relies on subjective principle of mercy and benevolence. Further, charitable giving humiliates the poor and robs them of their independence and self-respect; therefore, the civil society should ensure that charity to the poor is not necessary. On the other hand, state-giving would violate the principle of civil society in which each person must work. Additionally, if the poor are given work in order to preserve the principle of civil society, this gives rise to overproduction, which is the cause of rising poverty.⁴⁴⁰

From the above analysis it can be argued that Hegel is vague about what should be done to help the poor. First, it is not clear why self-respect and sense of independence is violated by receiving from charity yet in the end the poor would end up begging in the streets, which is equally humiliating. Second, while charitable giving is unreliable, begging in the streets is not reliable either for it is also contingent on the generosity and mercy of others. Additionally, it is not clear why it is more important to preserve the principle of civil society while indeed, to use Williams's terms, 'the poor are casualties of the civil society'. Structures in the civil society itself give rise to the condition of destitution for some members. Hegel's dilemma paralyzes all possibilities to help the poor for he disqualifies both charity and state-giving. Hegel's position on the problem of poverty in the society has been interpreted differently by scholars. Allen Wood's view is that Hegel leaves the poor to their own fate to beg in the streets. He argues that Hegel's

⁴³⁹Hegel., *Philosophy of Right*, §243.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 242.

theory of civil society raises an inevitable problem of poverty situation, which he admits cannot be resolved.⁴⁴¹

Stephen Houlgate holds that Hegel's introduction of the corporations is geared towards the solution of poverty in the society. He points out that corporations are the civil society itself taking measure against this problem. Houlgate argues that the corporations are more effective since they are the will of the people as opposed to imposition of regulations from external authority of the state.⁴⁴²

In Houlgate's interpretation, Williams sees in the corporations the answer to the situation of poverty. According to Williams, the corporations is a mediating social and ethical structure that is needed in the civil society itself to alleviate the problem of individualism that plagues the civil society creating a poor class. Following Houlgate, Williams contends that Wood ignores Hegel's idea of the corporation and its mediating role is an attempt to resolve the problem of poverty in the civil society. The corporations are mediating institutions that effect change in the society and bring about the realization of self-sufficiency envisioned in the civil society. According to Williams, the mediating structures would address the problem of atomistic individualism. This mediation activity would put a limit to individualism and so enhance communal goals.⁴⁴³

From Houlgate and Williams' interpretations two ideas can be inferred: they both hold that in Hegel's idea of the corporations, lies the solution to poverty situation in that within the corporations, the human person's dignity is restored through recognition and assurance of livelihood. I differ from this view. The corporations in today's society are impersonal entities

⁴⁴¹Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §244.

⁴⁴² Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 115.

and are not interested in what happens to the individuals. Even though the corporations can to a certain extent resolve the problem poverty in the sense that both Houlgate and Williams envision, they are as interested in profit as individuals. As such, the survival of the corporation is more important than the individual members. Williams is right in his suggestion that there is a need for mediating institutions but he is mistaken in his idealization of the corporations' relation to the individual members.

The main issue pertains to what Hegel's notion of recognition can mean in the contemporary society. The important question concerns how Hegel's idea of recognition would respond to the problem of alienation in the contemporary society. The answer to this question will help us understand the relevance of Hegel's ethical thought in the beginning of the new century.

It has been noted that despite the affluence of the civil society the later is not able to solve the problem of poverty.⁴⁴⁴ Even given Hegel's introduction of the corporations, alienation remains an issue in that his analysis does not come up with a positive solution but instead he points to the dilemma involved in any action aimed at alleviation of poverty.

Williams' interpretation of Hegel is that destitution is a willed human action arising from ethical and political decision. He insists that the civil society by its alienation of the poor and denying the principle of human interdependence is responsible for poverty situation.⁴⁴⁵ If Williams interpretation is right, ethical and political decisions can reverse the poverty trend. In the following section, I propose an ethical view that can both give to the poor and still preserve

⁴⁴³ Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 250.

⁴⁴⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 245.

⁴⁴⁵ Williams, *Ethics of Recognition*, 248 – 9.

both the sense of self-respect and independence of the human person. This view revolves around the notion of ‘coexistence and ethical responsibility’.

The notion of responsibility is not lacking in Hegel’s theory of ethics; it attaches to the idea of rights. As already indicated earlier, duties and rights are intrinsically related. However, Hegel does not extend responsibility beyond the relation of rights. While Hegel’s position on this relation is plausible, human responsibility goes beyond rights. Responsibility arises from the very idea of human co-existence. Coexistence means ethical relationships among human beings with one another. This relationship can be applied to human beings without detracting from the principle of civil society.

In Emanuel Levinas characterization a human being cannot evade the responsibility for the other. Ethical responsibility precedes any analysis that one could ever attempt. Hegel’s analysis sidesteps this idea. For Levinas, to leave men without food is a fault that no circumstance can justify. His view is that, voluntary and involuntary does not come into play in this understanding.⁴⁴⁶ The idea here is that attending to a poor person is not optional but a responsibility that comes with coexistence.

Levinas makes a fundamental point in this argument. He calls for original responsibility inherent in language. He insists that ‘responsibility is the ethical condition of language’ That is, the idea of language puts human beings in ethical relation. As such, language is not merely a relations of ideas among human beings but responsibility for the other. Responsibility does not in any way take away another’s life responsibility. It is stooping to lift the other so that he/she can be on his feet. It is bringing the human person back from marginalization and isolation. Benezet Bujo puts this right in his understanding of coexistence as ‘interdependence’ that does not take

away ‘independence’ among human beings.⁴⁴⁷ Bujo’s argument is independence does not preclude interdependence. The two do not interfere with human self-worth for human life is essentially both dependence and independence. They both enable the human being to give and receive from the community. Any separation of the two misses the point of what it is to be truly human. This concept of responsibility puts alienation into perspective so that it becomes a corporate issue rather than the victim’s problem. Alienation puts into question the vision of state for its people and calls for a review of its policies on ownership, labor policies and the whole question of justice. Hegel’s limitation is to view ethical responsibility as a question of dishing out aid but it is more than that; it mean advocacy for justice and addressing the causes of the fore mentioned problem. Far from contradicting the principle of civil society, it calls the members of the civil society to rise up to their responsibility.

As such, poverty in society is an ethical problem and Hegel’s emphasis on community Spirit is defensible from the perspective of human responsibility. In *Phenomenology*, He states:

The Spirit of universal assembly is negative to those systems. To ensure there is no extreme individualism the government must not let them become rooted and set in isolation, thereby breaking up the whole and letting the communal Spirit evaporate. Government has from time to time to shake them to their core....⁴⁴⁸

What the above text suggests is that Hegel is not ignorant of what individualism can do to the well being of the whole community. Earlier on, it was established that individualism is the main cause of poverty in the civil society. In the above text, Hegel indicates that the state has a role of ensuring this does not happen; “it must not let the individuals become rooted and set in isolation”. Conclusively, it is not the case that Hegel did not attempt to solve the problem of poverty albeit indirectly, for the state is represented as intervening and overriding individual

⁴⁴⁶ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 201.

⁴⁴⁷ Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 121.

interests for the good of the community. However, Hegel does not established whether or not the state's 'shake-up' of individual complacency extends to economic 'shake-up' or is limited only to the time of war. The state can assist the poor citizens without violating the principle of civil society. As a policy maker, the state can make decision with the view of what a given policy can do for the marginalized in the society.

While the civil society has its positive aspect of enabling the enterprising spirit of the human being to express itself, it can be an obstacle to well-being of some members; therefore, the state must regulate individualistic tendencies inherent in the system of civil society. Hegel interprets charity to the needy as violation of the principle of civil society, yet it is a duty recognized as noble not only in our time but also by the ancients. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle points out to this:

And it is natural that meanness is described as contrary to liberality; for not only is it a greater evil than prodigality, but men err more often in this direction than in the way of prodigality....⁴⁴⁹

The significance of Aristotle's text is that it places great emphasis on generosity, a virtue he characterizes as 'magnificence,' understood as giving for the sake of nobility of giving. According to Aristotle, it is not that one cannot make a mistake in giving; for one can give the wrong time and to the wrong person(s). However, for Aristotle, it is better to make the mistake of giving than not to give. By not giving, one not only avoids giving to the undeserving but also to the one who needs most.

Aristotle's point is important given Hegel's argument that giving contradicts the principle of civil society. For Aristotle, 'generosity' is good in itself. His claim is that though there is chance for error in giving, chances are that in giving one might give to the right person and in not giving one is not able to do so. Above all, giving transforms both the giver and the recipient. The

⁴⁴⁸Hegel., *Phenomenology*, §455.

one who gives opens up to a new world of fellow human beings. This aspect is vital to the human person; it opens the individual to the infinity. Bettina Bergo points out to the centrality of the notion of ‘infinity’ in Levinas’ thought: it is an ethical term and pertains to relation of responsibility for the other. The presence of the other interrupts the self’s emersion in the totalized world of enjoyment and work and calls for openness to the infinity.⁴⁵⁰ The significance of Bergo’s thought here is that it nullifies the kind of analysis that ends in a dilemma in Hegelian position on the problem of poverty. The moment of the encounter with the other through the ethical responsibility shatters the limited world for those involved.

Looking at Williams’s analysis concerning how Hegel addresses the problem of poverty, it can be argued that his view on the corporations’ role in alleviating poverty in civil society is plausible but it does not go far enough. Although the corporation offers a sense of recognition and honor to the members in a given institute, chances are that these corporations cannot absorb every person in the society and some people may not find membership in an institution. In addition, education and training in certain skills are necessary for employment by institutions. If for reason of poverty individuals cannot acquire the required skills they cannot belong to the corporation. Consequently, there will always be poor people in the society for no one intervention can rid the society of all causes of destitution. I suggest that irrespective of what the cause is, the poor must not be allowed to sink into the level of non-human situation. This can be ensured by making policies that ensure the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, and basic education are affordable/accessible. The main thing is to respond to the poor with the appropriate approach, as the situation requires. Some causes of poverty can be

⁴⁴⁹ Aristotle, ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ *Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1122a, 14–15.

⁴⁵⁰ Bettina Bergo, *Levinas Between Ethics and Politics*, (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic publishers, 1999), 23-24.

eradicated some cannot but this does not mean that intervention should be given up. This kind of intervention can only take place through the state.

Hegel alludes to state intervention by placing the state in such a way that it is both above the individual persons and the independent institutions in the civil society. Hegel insists that the “Spirit is the power of the whole, which brings the parts together...giving a sense of lack of independence and keeping them aware that they have their life only in the whole.”⁴⁵¹ From the preceding thought, Hegel is against the individualism that is responsible for poverty situation discussed in the *Philosophy of Right*. Even though Hegel has a place for the individual self-realization, the state is charged with the responsibility of checking the balance between communal and individual well-being. The tension between the individual and the communal interests is a motif that Hegel highlights in his theory of ethics. The emphasis on communal goals is not to be understood as suppression of the well-being of the individual but for ensuring that all have an opportunity for self-realization.

Hegel’s thought on the power of the government may seem crude and even misinterpreted to convey a totalitarian notion. However, it points to the important role the government can play for the good of all by regulating the economic policies in the civil society that tend to favor a few while others sink into poverty.

Based on the above reasons, I do not think that the corporation is capable of creating a safety net for the poor as the state would. Since the government can override the certain corporation policies for the good of all, it has a far-reaching effect than the corporation. This is not to say that the corporations are not important; it means that their effect on ameliorating the condition of the poor is more limited compared to the states’.

II. On the Rationality of the State

One other controversial point concerns Hegel's view of the state as 'rational'. There are various interpretations of Hegel's thought. Sidney Hook interprets Hegel's position as indicative of his close allegiance to the state of Germany. He contends that Hegel is a conservative and a proponent of socialist ideals.⁴⁵²

Hegel argues that rationality of state is based on its being guided by rational laws and 'substantial freedom'. According to Hegel, the state is not something to be 'known' and 'understood' in terms of explicit rationality. He maintains that the external appearances such as suffering and need for protection are only moments in the state's historical development not substance. Hegel insists that rationality of the state pertains to its internal nature not its phenomenal aspect. By 'internal' I take it to mean the concept of the state as an institution with its economic, political and social structure. According to this line of thinking, the state is absolute in its authority and in relation to other nations. For Hegel, the state is a divine institution and eternal in its character.⁴⁵³

The limitation of this presentation of the state is Hegel's emphasis on the concept as what counts for rationality of state. It is not sufficient to characterize the state as rational on the basis of its idea because it overlooks the absoluteness of what Hegel characterizes as 'moments' of historical development. For example, if a state upholds unjust structures or engages in evil acts such as genocide, the effects of these events are absolute in that they alter the lives of the victims forever. The same can be said of destitution. The victims of marginalization cannot realize their

⁴⁵¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §455.

⁴⁵² Sydney Hook, 'Hegel Rehabilitated?' in *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. Walter Kaufman (New York, NY: Atherton Press Inc., 1970), 59.

⁴⁵³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §258.

potential as human beings. Accordingly, it takes more than an idea of the state for the latter to be characterized as rational.

The two aspects that constitute the ‘rationality’ of state are substantive freedom and laws. For Hegel, ethical language is explicit in the laws. He maintains that the ethical language is not corrupted as one found in culture; instead, it is Spirit that has returned to itself; that is, it is self-consciousness of a people.⁴⁵⁴ However, how the purity of language can be guaranteed remains a problem. In political, social and economic world, language articulates ‘just’ as well as ‘unjust’ laws. Unjust laws perpetuate and promote the interests of a few elites at the expense of the rest of the society. Further, state laws and policies are for the most part made by the advantaged in the society. As mentioned earlier, the poor often have no voice in state policies that affect them. As a result, legal or ethical language tends to be biased against them.

In view of the above remarks, it can be argued that Walsh’s critique of Hegel concerning the latter’s position on individuals’ identity with the state is plausible. According to Walsh, at times the state is something to be tolerated than something with which the individual can identify.⁴⁵⁵ The issue pertains to how the state can be understood. With the foregoing analysis Hegel’s position on the rationality of the state is overly stated. His idealization of the state overlooks the fact that rationality of state is contingent on many factors. Such factors include the kind of leadership in state, the external relations with other nations, economics, the kind of ideologies the state upholds. As such, rationality of a state cannot be without qualification. Any rational state can only be so understood on the basis of the vision a given state has for its people and this can be discerned from laws and policies it adapts as means to realize that vision. The

⁴⁵⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §653.

⁴⁵⁵ Walsh, 49.

real test of rationality of state constitutes but not limited to how its poor are doing and only against such a standard can the rationality of a state be ethically determined. Aspects such as accessibility of basic education, access to health care, livelihood, security and justice for all are important constituents of rationality of a state; hence, what Hegel terms as divine aspect of the state and its absoluteness must be examined against such background and not only against its internal nature. Considering only its internal aspect ignores the phenomenal aspect. A comprehensive view of the state must consider both internal and external aspects taken together and only then can its rationality be properly determined.

III. Relativism in Hegelian Ethics

Finally, Hegel's ethical theory suffers from relativism. Walsh points to the difficulties involved in Hegel's position concerning evolution of consciousness. According to Walsh, Hegel cannot show what ethical standards ought to be upheld other than that they develop and displace one other in a historical fashion.⁴⁵⁶

Walsh's criticism is valid from one perspective. So long as there are no fixed ethical principles any community can justify any principles for the latter are contingent on which stage the community is in its moral development. Hegel does not think that the outcome of his position is ethical skepticism but he cannot avoid it. If justice is relative, every community or nation could hold different standards. Consequently, no nation or community is justified in reproaching another for degradation of human life. As a result, there cannot be cross-cultural ethical standards for the right and wrong.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 55.

In Hegel's theory, nothing is absolutely right or wrong; every ethical position evolves. In his notion of 'development of consciousness' Hegel avoids absolutism in ethics. Williams' reading is that Hegel's position indicates his awareness of the limitations of formal rationalism. He points out that Hegel, unlike Kant recognizes that certain duties that are justifiable on personal level can at times conflict with reality. Williams thus compares Hegel's relativism with Aristotle's arguing that both thinkers do not have absolute universal ethical principles that can be applied in all situations in life.⁴⁵⁷

I differ from Williams on this point. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle holds that ethics cannot admit the precision characteristic of certain sciences such as mathematics. For this reason, he makes ethics more flexible by introducing the notion of a *mean* and so depicts virtue as a state in between two extremes of absolute deficiency and excess in action. Aristotle's position raises some difficulties that cannot be discussed here. However, he admits that in certain vices there is no *mean*.

But it is not every action, not every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in case of action adultery, theft, murder; for all these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad and not the excess or deficiency of them. It is not possible then to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong.... Simply to do any of them is to go wrong.⁴⁵⁸

The point in this text is that although Aristotle acknowledges there is no precision in ethics, he also appreciates as Kant does that 'certain moral principles leap to the eye' that is, they are absolute and universal in their nature irrespective of circumstances or place. Conclusively, although Aristotle adapts a flexible position on ethics, there is, to use Walsh's terms, "a limit to moral invention." In Hegel's position it is unclear just what ethical principles can be outlived and which ones ought to be upheld whatever the circumstance or place.

⁴⁵⁷ Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 201.

⁴⁵⁸ Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics' *Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1107a 9–16.

On the other hand, Hegel's idea of evolution in ethics is not entirely disadvantageous to ethics. In history, human beings have known the necessity for individuals/societies to transcend certain ethical principles characteristic of a given culture and move on to a more comprehensive view of the ethical. Some religious and political positions held to be ethical at one time have proved an impediment to full human development; for example, practices such as inquisition, persecution, and even execution of those who held different views from the mainstream religious or political views were considered ethical. In addition, nations have promoted discriminatory laws against others on the basis of religion, race, color or gender. The significance of Hegel's position on evolution of ethical principles is that what is ethical can be arrived at through reflection within the wider human community. In this reflection shallow ethical principles are replaced by others that are more in keeping with what is truly good for the human beings' highest aspirations. Were it not for this evolution, the above mentioned social, religious and political positions would still be in place.

D

Hegelian Ethics and Contemporary Society

One of Hegel's main critics is Marx. Marx's charge against Hegelian philosophy is explicit in his text regarding the point at which philosophy must begin:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on this basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Marx and Engles, *The German Ideology Part One*, (New York, NY: International Publishers Co., INC., 1947), 47.

Marx's criticism suggests that Hegel's philosophy starts with consciousness and then proceeds to real life. There is a misinterpretation of Hegel on Marx's part concerning what Hegel means by 'consciousness.' By consciousness, I take Hegel to mean the 'actual' life of the human being in all its activities. Theory of consciousness can only be formulated from actual human activities. In *Phenomenology*, consciousness does not imply what goes on in the subjective mind but both subjective and objective aspect of the human being. Hegel's philosophy starts with real life for consciousness is life itself. For Hegel, life and consciousness are one and the same. Accordingly, Hegel's starting point is not abstraction from real life. Given this understanding of Hegel, Marx criticism against of philosophy can be addressed. According to Marx, "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it."⁴⁶⁰

I. Freedom and Contemporary Sociopolitical Thought

That Hegel's ethical thought has played a central role in transforming the world can be argued from two perspectives: first, his idea of the goal of humanity as freedom has had a lasting influence in the modern democracies. In the modern times, nations shape their political world around the concept of freedom. In this respect, Wood is correct in noting that modern political systems cannot resist Hegelian influence.

In Hegel's theory of ethics, the idea of freedom, its context in the society and the concept of the Spirit as plurality of consciousnesses are important features that could speak to any culture. The concept of an 'I' as a 'We' and a 'We' that is an 'I' is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of ethics.

John Plamenatz points out the important distinction Hegel makes between immediate freedom and the freedom realized. Plamenatz's reading of Hegel is that the latter distinguishes

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 123.

freedom in the sense of arbitrariness from rationality. Hegel recognizes arbitrariness as freedom, but insists that this freedom does not constitute the whole of freedom. Plamenatz's point is central in understanding Hegel. Freedom to do whatever one wishes is an immature understanding of freedom because it is pure abstraction. Freedom in terms of arbitrariness is not realized freedom; full realization of freedom is possible only in ethical life. As already pointed out, ethical life is that in which the subjective and social aspect of the ethical coalesce; For Hegel, 'the whole' in ethical context constitutes the subject and the society considered together. It is in this terms that Hegel speaks of 'I as a We and We that is I'.

Freedom for Hegel is not the immediate freedom of thought, which is immediate certainty of freedom. Real freedom is realized only in the community with other free beings. Plamenatz's interpretation is that while freedom is in a sense ability to choose between alternatives; true freedom constitutes self-determination according to objective principles. So construed, freedom is not a mere capacity to choose but to lead an orderly life as a result of one's own choice. The choices that one makes have to do with life governed by objective principles.⁴⁶¹

In bringing in the idea of objective principles, Plamenatz insists on essential condition of realization of freedom; exercise of freedom must be recognized by others. This brings in the legitimacy of property because it is in the latter that the will becomes objective. In Plamenatz's terms, property is a claim that is recognized by others. Following Hegel, he argues that property is not a manifestation of desire; instead, it is an ethical language that others speak as well; therefore, ethical language is a language between persons existing in a relation of rights. Claims of rights are only valid from the perspective of recognition. The force of Hegel's theory of right is that without property, there is no freedom, for property is objectification of the latter.

Ultimately, freedom is a communal concept other than individual since the community must be the context of its realization.

His vision of freedom as the goal of humanity has implications well beyond the western civilizations. With post-colonial Africa, the rise of independent nations means that one's identity is no longer based on a particular ethnic group but on one's nation. The greatest challenge to African societies is to identify oneself with the larger community outside one's cultural group. With the wave of democratization of African nations the idea of freedom no longer means freedom in an ethnic group but in a larger community – the nation. The result is that what counted as the ethical in one's cultural group is challenged by other cultures outside one's own and the law is often at odds with cultural ethical values.

The relevance of Hegel's concept of freedom is that it contributes to broader understanding of human freedom beyond one's cultural group. The notion of rights and responsibilities, the laws and constitution and all that goes with the idea of democracy is an important contribution. What freedom could mean in the emerging new Africa needs articulation in a way that is relevant to the African cultural, religious and social milieu. Democracy can indeed, find a home in African continent, for freedom is not a cultural right but a human good, goal and identity. The central issues is how it can be understood so that it does not result in terror and chaos as it has in some African nations.

To be sure, African communities had a political system and social-economic setup prior to colonization. Democracy is not westernization but a certain political-social structure that can be reinterpreted into any culture. One of the chief differences is that African type of democracy

⁴⁶¹ John Plamenatz, 'History as Realization of Freedom' in *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 38.

took place within a limited ethnic group. As such, people did not see themselves as a nation because they were not guided by the same constitution. With establishment of states, there are no longer tribal leaders but government officials with the president as the overall head of state.⁴⁶² These are dramatic changes in the political systems in recent decades; Therefore, it is more urgent and even necessary to articulate the meaning of freedom in a new way as the context in which it was culturally understood has changed.

In today's world, it is impossible to speak of a pure culture unmixed with other cultures. Accordingly, it is not possible to speak of pure African culture. The influence of the western civilizations results into a different thought system that is a synthesis of both western and African. In this respect, Hegel's concept of recognition as the basis of possibility of freedom needs to be reinterpreted within the African context.

The most important implication of the concept of 'I as a We and a We that is I' is the indispensable role of community in self-realization. Hegel's position has been interpreted as having the tinge of totalitarian orientation. This is a misinterpretation; Hegel's vision of community never loses the sight of the individual and it is against indifference to individual interests that his criticism against morality is directed. Hegel's position on the place of individual is explicit in the *Philosophy of Right*:

Particular interests should in fact not be set aside or completely suppressed; instead, they should be put in correspondence with the universal, and thereby both they and the universal are upheld. The isolated individual, so far as his duties are concerned, is in subjection; but as a member of civil society he finds in fulfilling his duties to it protection of his person and property, regard for his welfare, the satisfaction of the depth of his being, the consciousness and feeling of himself as a member of the whole....⁴⁶³

The main idea in the above text is that Hegel is not against 'individuality' but 'individualism'.

There is a difference between the two. The former is the condition for possibility of any ethic, for

⁴⁶² Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community, The African Model and Dialogue Between North and South*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications Africa, 1997), 158.

willing and doing have their ground on the individuality. The latter refers to self-isolation from the human community and is obsessed with self-interest to the point of sacrificing the good of others. For Hegel, individualism must be curbed for it results in the dissolution of community spirit. Further, individualism contributes to poverty situation in the society.⁴⁶⁴ In his emphasis on community, Hegel establishes that while individual has to plan and make choices, it is the community that makes possible realization of those plans. Accordingly, who one is and what one can become is only possible within the community of other human beings. Hegel's articulation of what constitutes the ethical whole is a milestone in his theory.

In the African thought system, the concept of 'totalitarianism' does not exist; yet self-identity is intrinsically tied to the community. Hegel's notion of an "I that is a We, and a We that is I" corresponds to the African view of a person. This idea is explicit in John Mbiti's view:

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of the past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole....⁴⁶⁵

Mbiti's characterization of African notion of a person sheds light on comprehensive view of the human person. One is not seen to be part of the whole so as to be totalized under the whole; rather, it is a belonging that makes 'recognition' possible. To be human is to belong to a human community as opposed to merely being rational. To belong to human community is to have a place in that community and implies assuming a responsibility and sharing in the privileges of belonging to a given community. It is in this sense that Mbiti argues that "Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, privileges and responsibilities towards himself and toward other people".⁴⁶⁶ The argument in this proposition is

⁴⁶³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §261.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 225.

⁴⁶⁵ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies*, (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1969),

that to be a human being is to be in a dynamic relation with others and without this relationship there is no self-identity. Mbiti's text echoes Hegel's view concerning indispensability of others for self-determination. In Mbiti's text, a human being is so understood not merely in terms of being rational, but in relation to one's place in the society in which one gives and receives in reciprocal fashion. As a result, the human person simultaneously exists to oneself and others. Mbiti goes on to explain that the belongingness of the individual to the community is manifest in corporate living: suffering, rejoicing and even thinking etc. are corporate events rather than in isolation. Mbiti like Hegel perceives human identity as deriving from the individual's relatedness with others so that one can only say "I am because we are, and because we are, I am."⁴⁶⁷

Hegel's idea of 'recognition' underlies the global relationship. Nations can recognize one another as free nations rather than possible colonies. In any confrontation, the aim is to initiate dialogue rather than domination. In these respects, Hegel's thought has not just 'interpreted' the world but has also transformed it in significant ways.

This is not to say that there are no pitfalls in global relationships. Mutuality of recognition between nations is yet to blossom to fullness. While there is no overt domination in terms of occupation by foreign power, economical and political domination has taken the place of traditional domination. There is a tinge of neocolonialism in global relations among nations; for example, political and economic policies are determined by others. In one sense, Hegel's concept of mutual recognition among nations is an ideal. As Hegel acknowledges in the *Philosophy of Right* serious conflict that results to war has at times replaced mutual recognition among nations.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 109.

II. Reciprocity as the Essence of Ethical Relationship

The view that human identity is dependent on relationship with others has an implication that becoming a person is a process since human relationship from which self-identity arises is a process.⁴⁶⁸ The real meaning of recognition then is a process that enables the human self to emerge not just as an individual but also as a community for this relationship is a network among persons. Properly understood, the principle of recognition means that even one's talents that are at the core of self-identity depend on recognition by others. The whole meaning of Hegel's idea of recognition is explicit in Williams' analysis:

....Hegel believes that if ethics is possible, then the threshold of the ethical must not only be open toward the other as the horizon of decision, but also crossed in actually making decision and commitments consistent with ethical life and freedom. When that threshold is crossed self and others must both count mutually recognizing each other and be ethically transformed.⁴⁶⁹

The emphasis in Williams' thought is the centrality of the idea of 'reciprocity' in recognition. The importance of this notion is that it allows the self and the other to stand on an equal footing; that means in the principle of recognition there is no privileged party.

The idea of reciprocity goes contrary to Emmanuel Levinas' conception of the ethical in *Totality and Infinity*. In this text, Levinas places greater emphasis on the 'other' as the determinant of the ethical arguing that the other as the ethical principle is always beyond the subject.⁴⁷⁰ Levinas' idea on human responsibility for the other is valid; however, his emphasis on the priority of the other does not do justice to the ethical relationship in which both self and the other must participate in the act of recognizing. The validity of Hegel's position on mutuality of recognition has its ground on the idea that the self must rationally justify the ethical principle of

⁴⁶⁸Bujo, *Foundations of African Ethic*, 114.

⁴⁶⁹Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 412.

⁴⁷⁰Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 195.

recognition, understood, as indispensable for self-realization. Hegel succeeds in establishing that ultimately, each person engages and commits oneself to principles that play a role in one's self-identity. While this can be judged as selfish, it is the means by which an individual furthers the well-being of others. As Williams reflects, "The result of mutual recognition that includes union, self-overcoming, and freedom is freedom and community in which freedom is not only preserved but also enhanced...."⁴⁷¹ The point is that mutuality in recognition is a union of wills and is the basis of freedom, which is the essence of ethical life.

Hegel's notion of recognition presents the greatest challenge to today's society. It implies a move from confrontation to dialogue. The former approach is an attitude of power, the latter approach is an attitude of respect in awareness of the other's freedom. The former approach seeks to have the other bend to the dictates of the self, the latter approach seeks a common ground and recognition that each party has to make certain concessions for a better relationship.

Hegel's vision of recognition as the basis of world Spirit or the ethical order is within reach, for it is a political decision to arrive at just and peaceful relations among nations. On the other hand, the ethical order is also at distant horizons because human beings tend to trade lasting values for short-term ones. However, the goal of Hegel's ethical thought is well taken. He makes a good case that human agency is behind whatever the world has become and it is responsible for the future world. It is in human beings' capacity to choose and create the kind of the world they want to have.

Hegel's view of the society as 'the whole' can be understood either as having a totalitarian vision or holding a hope for a society of responsible freedom. Both interpretations are possible depending on which aspect the reader wishes to emphasize. However, the latter position

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

seems to be a more representation of Hegel's thought in *Philosophy of Right* and *Phenomenology*. In this respect, Willims characterizations of the main orientation in Hegel's vision of an ethical society is plausible:

Ethical life is non-totalitarian, articulated totality that liberates and safeguards freedom and alterity. Ethical life in Hegel's sense is not totalitarianism but a bulwark against it.... Hegel's ethics of recognition not only remains relevant to contemporary concerns as counterdiscourse to modernity; as correction to both ancient and the moderns, it still has much to offer our disrupted and fragmented cultural situations....⁴⁷²

Williams' interpretations is in accord with Shlomo Avineri's reading of Hegel that for objective rules of reason to hold, one must take into consideration the subjective side.⁴⁷³ What this means is that the human agent must have subjective motivations to adhere to objective principles. Without such subjective justification, the moral/ethical principle fall by the way side. In other words, the subject must acknowledge one's stakes in the ethical principles. Avineri's interpretation undercuts the interpretation that Hegel's is an ethic with no place for the individual and so endorsing an empty universalism. Pelczynski's interpretation denies that Hegel is an authoritarian and an enemy of individual rights; his view is that Hegel is a precursor of individual rights and a proponent of a rational constitution that can defend and guarantee those rights.⁴⁷⁴

The two possible interpretations of Hegel are that he has no place for the individual or he is proponent of individual rights. I think both Avineri and Pelczynski's interpretations are plausible. A careful reading of *Philosophy of Right* reveals that although Hegel's position is that the society is 'the whole' of which the individual is a part, he is also concerned about the individual welfare. His criticism of Kant is geared towards placing the subject in the proper place

⁴⁷² Williams, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 412.

⁴⁷³ Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of Modern State*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1972),

in the ethical system as opposed to universality that does not consider the context of the subject. There are more textual evidence in support of both Avineri and Pelczynski's interpretation than against it. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's objective is to establish the point that there is a contradiction in overemphasis of the universal and seeks to reconcile the universal and particular aspects of the moral subject. In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel insists on necessity of considering the subjective side of the action. His overall position of the relation between the individual and society is:

The right of the subject's particularity, his right to be satisfied, or in other words the right of subjective freedom is the pivot and center of the difference between antiquity and the modern times. This right in its infinity is given expression in Christianity and has become the universal effective principle of a new form of civilization.⁴⁷⁵

With this text and others, Hegel cannot be reckoned as an enemy of individual right. Based on textual account, the idea that Hegel is against individual welfare is a one-sided interpretation. To be sure, Hegel insists that true freedom is only possible within the society. But to interpret this position as indicative of a totalitarian vision of society is incorrect. Properly understood, Hegel works towards a synthesis of opposing views of subjective and objective, individual and community. White Beck re-echoes this position in his view of the individual as a convergence of universal and particular who does not give laws to others that he does not give to himself. However, it remains an issue whether the idea of synthesis is also realized in the actual life.

In view of Hegel's notion of recognition as the essence of the ethical society, it can be argued that for the idea of recognition and the society he envisions to be realized, he needs Kant's vision of dignity of the human person. If Hegel's notion of recognition is to be relevant in our day, the 'value of humanity' in the Kantian terms 'human dignity' must be an essential part

⁴⁷⁴Pelczynski, 'Hegel Again' in *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, (New York, NY: Artherton Press Inc., 1970), 83.

⁴⁷⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §124.

of the idea of recognition. That means, political and economical structures have to be in keeping with the most comprehensive understanding of human being.

What is really problematic in Hegel's civil society is that the dignity of a human person is not part of the principle determining the policies. A human being is used not as an end in itself but as a means to wealth. Marx's indictment of the civil society is valid; human beings should not sink into the level of commodity, as was the case in Marx's time. If this is to be avoided, Kant's principle of humanity must always guide society policies, political, economic or otherwise. The charge that the Kantian ethics is abstract means that the individual does not understand the heart of Kant's message in the *Formula of Humanity*. It is when the world loses sight of this principle that all kinds of abuse are perpetrated against human beings; both the past and present this has always been the case. This is Kant's legacy to humanity, a real guide for what another human being stands for. In this respect, Kant and Hegel's theories can be appealed to as a philosophical response to global issue of alienation. The reason to appeal to both theories is that taken by itself, one is not adequate to respond to the issues that confront our contemporary world.

The force of Kant's theory lies in his unshakable position concerning the dignity or value of the human person. On this, his moral theory arises and returns. He espouses the idea of human freedom. For Kant, the idea of human dignity is grounded on human beings' rational nature in virtue of which rational nature is endowed with the capacity to set ends as self-determination and this must be respected. Kant is a respecter of what Hegel would characterize as *arbitrary freedom*. For Kant and Hegel, this is the basis of objective freedom; 'autonomy' in Kant's theory, 'substantive' freedom for Hegel.

For Kant, human dignity is paramount. Whatever ends that individual/communal activity wishes to achieve, the given activity must have human dignity as the guiding principle. Consequently, it is on the basis of the value of human being that state laws arise and end. Conclusively, moral/ethical theory that loses sight of the human being as an end ignores a vital element of what constitutes the ethical. Kant's concept of the value of human person is that laws and policies cannot be said to realize the human good if only a few members in a community realize that good. This is important not only in domestic but also on global level. The influence of Kant's thought can hardly be overemphasized. The sharpened awareness of human rights has its roots from Kant's view of human dignity as inviolable. It can be argued that the reality of alienation in its varied forms has its cradle as failure on the part of human beings to see the value of humanity as Kant saw it and to take part in realizing it. If human dignity were the guiding principle for policies among nations, alienation and other forms of marginalization would not occur.

While the centerpiece in Kant's thought is the dignity of the human person, there are certain positions in Kant's theory that make his ethical principles untenable. As indicated in the last chapter, Kant's position on the place of the 'subject' in his system of ethics is problematic. The weight of Hegel's ethical system lies in situating the subjective as a condition for comprehensive understanding of the moral action. In this, the subjective is brought to bear on what constitutes the ethical whole. In Hegel's analysis, satisfaction of the subject is necessary, for willing and doing can only have meaning from this perspective. It is for this reason that Hegel perceives an organized state as an important condition for the realization of the individual and communal good.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

For Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, ethical thought revolves around freedom. The thrust of Hegel's discourse is to establish a relation between individual and communal freedom. By idea of synthesizing polarities of different aspects of human freedom Hegel aimed at resolving this tension. The objective of this section is to identify what is problematic in Hegel's ethical system and fill in this gap.

Hegel's thesis is that the 'true' is the 'whole.' T. M. Knox understands Hegel's idea of the 'whole' or 'absolute' as 'life.' Understood in this in life both law and inclination coalesce.⁴⁷⁶ According to Knox, love and life in Hegel's system are synonymous; it is the point at which the synthesis of opposing terms is realized. If Knox is right in this interpretation, Hegel's proposition concerning the absolute, the whole cannot be underestimated. It explains, his project of trying to unify opposing poles in his ethical system. Accordingly, Hegel's ethical system establishes a relation between subjective and objective freedom that makes an ethical whole – a synthesis of individual and communal freedom. For Hegel, freedom is the absolute good. It turns out that freedom is life, the whole and absolute good. So understood, Hegel unifies individual and communal good and its realization in concrete life. Kant and Hegel are in unison regarding to the ultimate goal of humanity, although they differ about how and in which sense the highest good is realized. Hegel contributes to modern ethical reflection the view that the state is an ethical institution through which concrete freedom of the individual and the community is realized. In other words, the state is the synthesis of subjective and objective freedom.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 52.

⁴⁷⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §260.

For Hegel, private property is justified because it concretizes freedom. Hegel's position is central to Marx and is the basis of Marx's argument against Hegel. According to Marcuse's reading of Marx, if property is the objectification of freedom, it follows those in society's poor are not free: Hence the 'proletariat' class is neither free nor persons, for they have no property and cannot participate in Spirit.⁴⁷⁸ Marcuse's reading of Marx is that poverty in the society takes away the force of Hegel's thesis justifying a civil society whose framework rests on the concept of labor. Marcuse asserts that civil society is unjust because its forms of labor result in alienation of the human person rather than in human fulfillment. Labor denotes 'universal suffering,' and 'universal injustice'.⁴⁷⁹

Bernard Cullen among others points out that the reality of poverty in society is one of the dark aspects in Hegelian ethical thought.⁴⁸⁰ Despite Hegel's endeavors to unify the opposing poles of individual and communal good, realization of this good is possible only to some. Private property as the objectification of freedom holds the possibility of individual self-realization, yet, paradoxically is the cause of alienation among human beings.⁴⁸¹

Marcuse identifies Hegel's problem to be extravagant notion that thought and reality synchronize. According to Marcuse, Hegel mistakes progress in consciousness as resulting in higher and better forms of reality. Hegel's notion of the synthesis between individual and communal good, appears conceptually noble. However, the history of injustice and oppression shows the contrary.⁴⁸² Despite the notion of the state as the realization of concrete freedom, freedom as Hegel has it is realizable only by some.

⁴⁷⁸ Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 261.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Bernard Cullen, *Hegel's social and Political Thought*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press 1979), 85.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 87 – 88.

⁴⁸² Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 246.

Marcuse's argument is crucial to evaluating the extent to which Hegel's thought advances individual freedom; for example, Hegel's concept is that the individual is a part of the 'whole', the whole being the society.⁴⁸³ In this, Hegel reiterates the Aristotelian notion of wholes and parts, substance and accident. So understood, the individual is accidental to the concept of the whole. But the problem of this notion is in presenting the individual as dispensable and replicable. While by 'whole' and 'part' Hegel implies the idea of dependence and interdependence in human existence, he falls short of portraying the real significance of the individual, the uniqueness of each person. The individual has a unique place and so is a necessary member of the community. This idea is echoed by Boju who argues that even though the African view emphasizes community, individual is a necessary member of the society. Individuals are indispensable for they hold ethical convictions and conduct. As such, the group does not dissolve individual identity.⁴⁸⁴ Theodore Adorno articulates this point in his critique of Hegel. According to Adorno, integration of the universal and the particular has meant loss of particularity.⁴⁸⁵ It follows that while the idea of dependence and interdependence is understandable, it is not as smooth as it sounds. In question here is the harmony between individual and communal freedom. Hegel's thesis of the state as the realization of concrete freedom raises the question concerning the extent to which this notion is realized by all.

The reality is that some members in society are victims of alienation. To be sure, Hegel is not ignorant of the problem. Indeed, his portrayal of the plight of the poor and various solutions indicate this awareness. He points out that while on the phenomenal level it takes the shape of

⁴⁸³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §261.

⁴⁸⁴ Bujo, *Foundations of African Ethic*, 24.

⁴⁸⁵ Theodore W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, (New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1973), 315.

material privation, the end result is a degeneration of values and self-respect. In Cullen's terms, the end product of poverty is 'spiritual decay'.⁴⁸⁶

Scholars disagree as to whether or not Hegel offers any definitive solution. My reading of Hegel is that although he weighs different solutions, he ends in a dilemma. Even if it is that Hegel's idea of corporations is a solution to the problem of poverty, Hegel's treatment of this issue is adequate. He argues that whichever solution is used to ameliorate the problem, such as charitable-giving, leaving the responsibility to the civil administration, etc. exacerbates the problem.⁴⁸⁷

Hegel suggests that since overproduction is the cause of poverty, there is a need to seek outside markets which means establishing colonies abroad.⁴⁸⁸ In this Hegel ignores ethical repercussions of colonization. A colonized nation is no longer free but a mere instrument of slave labor. More over, colonization destroys the culture and values that are the moral fiber of any people. One may argue that in Hegel's position the end justifies the means. However, this approach disagrees with the idea of the value of a person, and defies the essence of justice. Indeed, one cannot speak of ethics to a colonized nation.

In my understanding of Hegel, his attempts to resolve the problem of poverty fail not because they are useless but because they are one-sided. If all there is to the problem is giving to the poor, the result, is a failure because there is an end to giving. Although Hegel discusses the effects of poverty, he fails to see how the causes of poverty interlock. He sees overproduction as the cause, it is not the only one. Poverty is an interplay of forces against individuals and communal development. Viewed from multiple perspectives, the problem must be resolved on

⁴⁸⁶ Cullen, 86.

⁴⁸⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §245.

⁴⁸⁸ Cullen, 89.

various fronts. Accordingly, neither charitable-giving nor government provisions ought to be dismissed as Hegel suggests. Charity should not be an end in itself but should have as its objective bringing independence to the individual.

Hegel's claim that true freedom is possible only within society is well taken, for solitary freedom is no freedom. Adorno, agrees that freedom is never to be conceived apart from human society. In Adorno's terms, freedom is entwined not to be isolated.⁴⁸⁹ Fichte's position that one becomes a human being only among others remains valid in Hegelian ethics. However this does not translate into subsumption of individuals within what is characterized as the universal Spirit. In this respect Adorno's point that it is the individuals who experience injustice is valid. In this there is no synthesis of particular and universal. A crucial aspect of Hegel's analysis is his position that society is responsible for the situation of poverty; it arises from actions of society. Therefore, society is capable of reversing the trend of poverty. I propose two measures as antipoverty principles: (1) justice must be at the base of antipoverty activity. (2) development must be necessarily understood and approached from a broad vision.

A

The Principle of Justice

In John Rawls' discourse, justice is defined as fairness.⁴⁹⁰ While this is a general definition, it is not mysterious to any rational being. Rawls characterizes justice as agreement of what is right among parties living together as equal and free rational beings. For Rawls and certainly for Hegel, justice is not leveling people in terms of ownership and liberties. According

⁴⁸⁹ Adorno 219.

⁴⁹⁰ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1971), 11.

to Rawls, inequalities must be justified only in terms of the common good.⁴⁹¹ From this understanding it may be rightly argued that there cannot be freedom without the realization of justice. For Rawls, justice is the basis of any possible cooperation among human beings and this cooperation is necessary.⁴⁹² Therefore, true freedom is possible only if justice becomes the guiding principle of the state.

Rawls notion of justice hinges on Kant's 'formula of autonomy' in which the respect of a human being is grounded on human capacity for self-legislation. It presupposes a profound understanding of a rational being capable of leading an ethical life within an ethical community. To act with justice and to promote just policies means acting according to our truest self, human beings capable of living as equal rational beings.⁴⁹³ If rationality as is argued implies a capacity to set ends, justice would mean equal opportunities for all to develop their human potential.

Rawls' point here is crucial; it implies that acting with justice is not only to treat the human persons in understanding of who they are but also to enable them to act like humans. Accordingly, the more unjust the community is, the less likely to act humanly are the members. Therefore, to foster a just community is a condition for freedom for one cannot act freely if one is not treated like a free being. This is the condition for members in the society live truly ethical life as Hegel envisions, it take more than law enforcement; fairness is necessary. In Aristotle's terms, justice is a complete virtue because where there is justice all other virtues are found.⁴⁹⁴ It follows that where justice is not the principle guiding state policies, all other values in the community disintegrate.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 53

⁴⁹² Ibid., 109.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 225.

⁴⁹⁴ Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics' 1129b25 – 27.

B

Broad Vision of Development

“Until the lions have their historians, the tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter.”

Alan B. Durning’s discussion on development begins with this African proverb. The point here is who says what about development. According to Durning, the twentieth century was considered a century of economic miracles. However, this characterization belongs to the elites of the world; those at the margins of the society have a different perspective.⁴⁹⁵ A statistical report on the status of the world poor is unnecessary because world events speak for themselves. However it helps to note the truth of the lions and the tales of hunting. Alienation in today’s society is a reality that philosophy cannot ignore.

In his discussion of development, Albert T. Dalfovo begins with the startling remark that development becomes a problem itself or compounds the problem it aims to solve.⁴⁹⁶ Dalfovo’s reflection raises one of the most pressing questions today. He blames the negative results of development on the prevailing notion that limits it to economic.

What is the place of philosophy in the scheme of human development especially in the impoverished countries. During the Pan-African Symposium on “Problematics of an African Philosophy,” Claude Summer remarked on the irrelevance of question on the nature of philosophy while people were dying of hunger. Following Summer, Dalfovo contends that the important question no longer pertains to the nature of philosophy, but the relevance of

⁴⁹⁵ Alan B. Durning, “Poverty and Environment: Reversing the Downward Spiral” *Worldwatch Paper* 92 (November 1989), 5

⁴⁹⁶ Albert T. Dalfovo, “The Rise and Fall of Development: A Challenge to Culture” *African Philosophy*, Vol. 12, no. 1, (1999), 38.

philosophy to pressing issues of today.⁴⁹⁷ In Africa the discipline of philosophy is challenged to offer an approach to the problems facing the Third World. Philosophy can offer a broader vision and a more comprehensive approach to development as educators in higher institutes. According to Dalfovo, there is a need for a clarified philosophical approach to development.

As in Hegel's time, Africa as a the developing continent is confronted with social and political problems, of poverty, the AIDS epidemic, environmental degradation, and civil wars that have claimed millions of lives in the last century and continue to do so in the twenty-first century. Opposed to a more traditional approach of purely speculative analysis of the human relationship with the world, philosophy must engage in these issues. In Dalfovo's terms, "...it is important to recognize that development is a question before being an answer, it is a problem before being a solution."⁴⁹⁸ Unlike the prevailing idea of resolving today's problems with development, at issue is to identify what problems or questions is developmental activity a solution or an answer.⁴⁹⁹

Poverty is a generic term denoting a 'degraded' human life. Robert McNamara, then of the World Bank, described the ethos of poverty in 1978, in terms that left no room for imagination:

A condition of life so limited by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency.⁵⁰⁰

This description is familiar to many in the Developing Nations today. Poverty is as debilitating to human life today as it was in Hegel's time. Durning reflects that poverty extends beyond economic problems; it drains human dignity and self-respect. Durning reiterates Hegel's view of the effect of poverty: it results to a 'rabble mentality' among its victims.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁹⁸ Dalfovo, 38.

The force of poverty moves across local, national, and international levels. Locally, the poor have no assets. For this reason, they are physically weak and prone to diseases. This combines with helplessness and overpopulation to make their situation unbearable. On the national level, government policies often biased against the rural population so that development takes place in cities. In addition, the **affluent's** banking their money abroad has resulted in the rich getting richer and the poor poorer.⁵⁰¹ On the international level, the developing countries' debt is overwhelming. The late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania lamented that the only choice left is to starve the children to death in order to pay the debt. Unfortunately, many countries in the African continent have witnessed this tragedy.⁵⁰²

The place of philosophy in this context is to come up with a philosophy of the development of the whole human person. Dalfovo notes that to many, the concept of development is limited to 'catching up with the West' in mere economic terms. Development must be rid of this idea and brought to mean bringing wholeness to human life in terms culture, moral, and political as well as economic wholeness.⁵⁰³

Dalfovo's argument has various implications. First, it calls for a different criterion of evaluating development. It cannot any more mean economic development, but development of the whole person and for all people, not just a few. Characterization of the twentieth century as an era of development is contradicted by historical evidence, which shows not only that the standard of many poor people has remained stagnant but that it has continued to fall. Second, when the emphasis of development is economic, human development lags behind. It is not uncommon to see towers rising up in large cities while the rural poor are neglected and

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁰⁰ Durning, 7.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 6.

corruption is rampant; economic development is not necessarily the development of a people. A broader vision of development offers a critical evaluation of what development would mean in a given cultural setting. This approach does not settle for tall buildings in the cities but it inquires into the standard of living for all. Development from a broader perspective includes the whole social system's moving from a degraded life to spiritual and material development.

Development must be guided by two ingredients of justice as fairness. First, it must be guided by what Rawls conceives as the 'principle of difference'. By this is meant adapting policies that maximize the prospects of the least advantaged in the society. According to Rawls, increasing the opportunities of those better off rarely improves the opportunities of the least advantaged.⁵⁰⁴ This principle, does not take away from the prospects of the well-to-do, rather, it is a preference for the marginalized so that the whole society is better off. Rather than a social system in which only a few are well off, this principle benefits everyone in the society.

Most of the evils in society have as their root the gap between the rich and the poor. The wider this gap is the more a society deteriorates morally. In any nation, when standards of the least fortunate are improved everyone including the affluent is better off.

The 'redress principle' goes hand in hand with the difference principle. The redress principle has the idea of compensation to those whose social status is unfavorable due to no fault of their own. Such misfortune may be due to natural conditions or other contingencies; for example, not all people make their way to college. It is important that the system provide other opportunities to these individuals so they can be contributing members of society.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 16.

⁵⁰³ Dalfovo, , 41.

⁵⁰⁴ Rawls, 69.

But socially least-favored goes well beyond academic status; it embraces refugees and other emigrant persons. This is important in African countries wherein millions of people have been displaced by civil wars and are seeking refuge in more stable nations. These groups are at the mercy of many contingences, and if not well handled they can jeopardize the security, stability, and other aspects of life in the host countries.

Rawls argues that inequalities are not a problem to be eliminated, but neither can they be ignored. The framework of society can be in such a way that no one gains or loses due to natural or social contingencies. That is, society has the responsibility of ensuring that inequalities do not in themselves warrant alienation of some members in the society. Rawls rejects the idea that nature is primarily unjust and so human injustice follows as a matter of course. According to Rawls, the so called injustice in natural distribution cannot be used to condone injustice, for it is human actions that determine the effects of the unequal distribution of human potential.

In view of the principle of justice and a comprehensive vision of development, reversing the poverty trend and its debilitating effect on human life demands measures that reflect Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of development: "putting first those whom society puts last." According to Gandhi, any activity towards development must be tested using the following criterion:

....recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his life and destiny? ⁵⁰⁵

Alleviating poverty and for development to help the poor it calls them to participate in the process. It may pertain to redistribution or reform in ownership of resources such as land. More importantly, placing the poor first means that development must have the poor as

⁵⁰⁵ L. C. Jain, Poverty, Environment, Development: A View from Gandhi's Window, *Economic and Political Weekly* (February 13, 1988), 311-317.

beneficiaries, participants in development, and advisors and leaders. Durning insists that the only true experts on poverty are the poor.⁵⁰⁶ Accordingly, there is a need for fostering organized poor as a grass-root antipoverty strategy.

Second, good development begins with education. One of the underlying causes of poverty is illiteracy. Education has been judged as the foundation of a healthy society both in antiquity and no less in our times. In Hegel's analysis education and skill are important resources denied the poor:

Not caprice, however but also only contingencies, physical conditions, and factors grounded in external circumstances ...may reduce men to poverty. – their poverty leaves them more or less deprived of all the advantages of society, the opportunity of acquiring skill or education of any kind as well as administration of justice, the public health services, and often even of the consolation of religion....⁵⁰⁷

A serious consequence of illiteracy is the adverse effect it has on the individual's capacity to earn a living. In developing countries, education and skill are directly linked with bread at table. Durning's documentation supports Hegel's claim in the observation that the majority of poor people everywhere are illiterate. For lack of education the poor cannot acquire information and knowledge they so badly need. Even among landless workers, those who can read and write are at an advantage over those who cannot.⁵⁰⁸

Education is pivotal. The uneducated do not know their rights and are vulnerable to exploitation and injustice of every kind. Education then must be at the base of any policy aimed at human development. Its value extends beyond economic opportunities; it enables the individual to enjoy one's culture and participate in the affairs of society, creating a sense of self-worth.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §241

⁵⁰⁸ Durning, '21.

⁵⁰⁹ Rawls,, 87.

A third antipoverty strategy is to educate women. Women's education not only raises the level of income in families but equips them with information for better nutrition and family planning. The last point is crucial in Africa where overpopulation has meant less land for cultivation and degradation of environment.⁵¹⁰ With improved nutrition, child mortality decreases. Consequently, families do not need to produce many children to ensure that some survive.

Education of women does not mean that education for men is disregarded; both men and women need to develop their potential. However, women everywhere experience worse poverty. In Africa there is no poor man like a poor woman because cultural barriers prohibit women from taking certain occupations.

Finally, an antipoverty strategy requires providing low-cost clean water and health care. Poor people are more susceptible to diseases and weakness due to malnutrition. Poverty is a vicious circle. For lack of food the poor have no energy to work, and for lack of work they have no money to buy food. Therefore no one approach to poverty is adequate. Instead, poverty must be countered from various fronts in conjunction with one another. Every action against poverty contributes to the goal of breaking the cycle if the long-term goal is empowerment for independence and control over one's destiny. This undercuts Hegel's argument that giving to the poor destroys the principle of the civil society. Still, Hegel's argument that the problem of poverty cannot be left to the contingency of charity is valid. This is because charity-giving cannot continue indefinitely. Accordingly, to reverse the poverty trend takes individual, local, national, and international ethical resolve.

⁵¹⁰ Durning, 29.

Those working for development in the Third World attest that a setback to development is the arms trade. No sooner is a health clinic, school, and infrastructure built than civil war breaks out using imported war technology; all is destroyed. More promising is what individuals can do for themselves if empowered nonviolently. However, the individual, the local government, the nation, and indeed, the nations of the world must keep in sight the infinite value of the human being as envisioned by Kant and realizes this value through freedom as Hegel envisions. To invest in humanity is the only worthy cause.

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